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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the situation of ethnic minority students in predominantly white British schools, highlighting factors affecting their educational achievement and examining the perspectives of ethnic minority students and their parents and teachers. Surveys of the performance of over 34,000 students in predominantly white schools in 35 local education authorities indicated that white children in mainly white schools outperformed those in urban, multiethnic schools. Children from black Caribbean, Indian, and Pakistani background in the same schools outperformed their urban counterparts on one exam but not a second. Aspects of students' ethnicity were central to their self-identification. There was considerable variation in how far they would have liked to see their ethnic identity expressed more fully and openly at school. A significant proportion of minority students reported race-related name calling or verbal abuse at school. No school had a fully developed strategy for preparing students through the curriculum for life in a diverse society. No school had a strategy in place for supporting English as a Second Language students beyond initial stages. Teachers reported that in most case, the issues with which this research was concerned had not been covered in their initial or inservice training. (Contains 85 references.) (SM)

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RESEARCH

Minority Ethnic Pupils in Mainly White Schools

Tony Cline, Guida de Abreu, Cornelius Fihosy, Hilary Gray, Hannah Lambert and Jo Neale

University of Luton

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In particular, we would like to record our thanks to the staff of the case study schools and to the children and parents who participated in the project. Their generosity with their time and their frank articulation of their views were crucial to the project. All schools, families and children have been given pseudonyms in order to maintain their anonymity.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Most research on the education of minority ethnic pupils has focused on multiethnic schools in urban areas (i.e. schools with a substantial proportion of minority ethnic pupils). This study investigated the situation of minority ethnic pupils in mainly white schools. Many more teachers and schools than in the past now have some minority ethnic pupils. The report highlights factors that might affect the educational achievements of these pupils and examines the perspectives on the situation of minority ethnic pupils and parents as well as their teachers.

For the purposes of the research, a "mainly white school" was defined as a school in which only 4 – 6% of pupils were from minority ethnic backgrounds. The fact that there are so few minority ethnic pupils on roll presents major challenges in conducting research in this field. Firstly, with very few minority ethnic pupils in each cohort the effectiveness of individual schools cannot be measured reliably in terms of that group's educational performance. Secondly, it is not possible to study variations in performance between children from different minority ethnic backgrounds, even though substantial variations between groups have been recorded in urban settings. The key findings that are outlined below should be interpreted with caution, keeping these points in mind.

Key Findings

1. A survey of the performance of over 34,000 pupils in mainly white schools in 35 LEAs indicated that children from a White background in mainly white schools outperformed those in urban multiethnic schools in Key Stage 2 SATs and GCSE exams - presumably because these schools were in socially more advantaged areas.
2. Children from Black Caribbean, Indian and Pakistani backgrounds in the same schools also outperformed their urban counterparts at GCSE level but *not* at the end of Key Stage 2. Children from minority ethnic backgrounds shared in whatever educational advantages were available in these schools to the same degree as children from a White background in secondary school but not in primary school.
3. In many schools and LEAs this data was either not available or unreliable, mainly because of uncertainties around the recording of pupils' ethnic background.
4. Individual interviews in fourteen mainly white schools indicated that aspects of ethnicity were central in the pupils' self-identification. But there was considerable variation in how far they would have liked to see their ethnic identity expressed more fully and openly at school. Schools face a challenging task in attempting to respect this range of views.
5. A significant proportion of the minority ethnic pupils reported race-related name calling or verbal abuse at school or while travelling to and from school. For example, in the questionnaire survey 26% said that they had had such experiences during the previous week.
6. No school in this sample had a fully developed strategy for preparing pupils through the curriculum for life in a diverse society. Presented with alternative ideals of how

diversity might be treated, most informants saw their school or class as trying to treat all children equally and playing down ethnic and cultural differences. A minority of schools or classrooms in this sample were seen as partially adopting the alternative stance of stressing and valuing cultural diversity.

7. Teaching provision for children in the early stages of learning English as an additional language (EAL) was variable, and no school had a strategy in place for supporting children with EAL beyond the initial stages.

8. Teachers reported that, in most cases, the issues with which this research was concerned had not been covered either in their initial training or in any recent in-service training.

Background

By 1996/97 all secondary schools and three quarters of primary schools had at least some minority ethnic pupils, but in over two thirds of all schools the proportion of minority ethnic pupils was less than 5%. There are only eight small LEAs that have very few or no schools with a significant proportion of minority ethnic pupils (more than 4%). These are located exclusively in the North East, South and West regions. The great majority of teachers across the country may now expect to work with minority ethnic pupils at some point in their career, and mainly white schools in almost all areas may expect to admit minority ethnic pupils more frequently than in the past.

Research questions

The key research questions were:

- Are there differences in levels of educational achievement between minority ethnic children in mainly white schools and children from the same ethnic backgrounds in multiethnic schools?
- Do perceptions and experiences of the school learning environment and home support differ between minority and majority ethnic children in mainly white schools?
- How do children and young people from minority ethnic groups see/experience their lives in mainly white schools?
- Do children from minority ethnic backgrounds experience race-related harassment and bullying in the schools, what measures are taken to protect them, and what level of confidence do they and their families have in what is done?
- How do minority ethnic parents and children see the relationship between their home culture and the children's school culture and between their home culture and the ethos of the neighbourhood where they live?
- How do teachers in the schools view the education of children and young people from minority ethnic groups? Are there areas of knowledge, competencies and resources that they perceive as essential but feel they do not have?
- To what extent do curricula, school ethos and classroom practices reflect the diversity of society as a whole and meet the needs and interests of all children in the schools, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds?

Methods used in the research

To address these questions the research was conducted in three parts. Part 1 focused on the questions about educational performance. LEAs with significant numbers of mainly white schools were approached to provide data on Key Stage 2 and GCSE results in all schools in the authority's area with 4 – 6% minority ethnic pupils. The survey involved the collation of results obtained by over 34,000 pupils in 35 local authority areas.

Parts 2 and 3 focused on a small sample of 14 schools in four regions of the country. These schools each had 4 – 6% minority ethnic pupils but otherwise varied in size, type of catchment area and performance. We worked with Years 3 – 6 in primary schools and Years 7 – 9 in secondary schools. In Part 2 both white and minority ethnic pupils in that age range completed a questionnaire survey that explored their perceptions of life at school and of home support for their education. Part 3 focused on minority ethnic children exclusively. We interviewed 61 pupils in Years 3 - 9, one or both of their parents (in most cases) and a sample of 77 of their teachers. Apart from class teachers, form tutors and/or heads of year, we met with head or deputy head teachers and the teachers in each school responsible for Mathematics, Religious Education and Physical Education. The pupils came from a range of minority ethnic groups, including a significant proportion of children who had a mixed heritage background, reflecting the composition of the minority ethnic population of the schools.

Principal findings from interviews in fourteen case study schools

Children and families

1. For the children we interviewed the most important features of their ethnic self-characterisation stemmed from their families. A sense of ethnic identity was promoted by most parents through teaching their children their home language or religious and cultural values and through involving them in contacts with and visits to networks of relatives and friends from the same ethnic background. An additional factor influencing how they saw their ethnic identity was the way in which they and other members of their ethnic group were perceived and treated outside the home.
2. Two thirds of the children had some exposure to a community language within the household. Among those parents who were bilingual most would have liked their children to become fluent speakers of their own first language. Few of the children were on track to do so, unless they had themselves come to the UK from overseas with a fluent command of the language already established.
3. Participation in community religious education featured prominently in the daily lives of many Muslim children in the sample and played a part in the weekly routines of children from some other faith traditions. Regular attendance posed considerable challenges to those living at a distance from a centre of religious life, and a number of parents made individual, private arrangements to overcome these problems.
4. Mixed heritage children form a significant group among the minority ethnic population of mainly white schools. Many parents believed that this heritage posed additional difficulties for their child's development of a clear sense of identity. Some referred to the risk of black and white partners' children not being accepted within either community. Our discussions with the teachers rarely showed that they were

aware of the parents' concerns and suggested that their uncertainties about the treatment of all minority ethnic pupils were most acute with mixed heritage children.

Social integration and racism

5. The majority of the children who had been at their school for a significant length of time were well integrated socially and enjoyed the same range of patterns of friendship within their peer group as would be expected of any other children in these schools. In addition, a minority had a small network of acquaintances from their own ethnic community either at school or based on their parents' network at home.

6. While very few of those we interviewed had been physically harassed in racist incidents, over a third of the children reported experiences of hurtful name calling and verbal abuse either at school or during the school journey. For around half of these the harassment was continuing or had continued over an extended period of time.

7. Official procedures to reduce race-related bullying relied on children and parents to report any problems that occurred, but strong factors undermined their willingness or ability to do so. Consequently, in most of the schools some of the children and parents put little trust in the official reporting procedures, preferring to rely on their own resources, such as the protection of an older sibling.

Schools

8. In this sample of schools the Religious Education curriculum reflected the diversity of contemporary society more fully than any other aspect of the school curriculum. Pupils and parents responded positively both to teaching about their own religion and to the opportunities that were given for children to learn about other faith traditions.

9. As noted above, no school in this sample had a fully developed strategy for preparing pupils through the curriculum for life in a diverse society. The teachers we interviewed did not see any recent development at national level as encouraging a focus on this area of work. Moreover, until very recently Ofsted inspections of the schools did not appear to have stimulated thinking on how the curriculum might address diversity to that end. This issue had been addressed during the most recent school inspections and is now a theme in the National Curriculum programmes of study in Citizenship.

10. Few of the schools had admitted many pupils in recent years who had needed additional support because they were learning English as an additional language. Teaching provision varied markedly in those schools which did need it with some reliance on ad hoc arrangements and on staff with expertise in special educational needs. But there were also examples of schools making effective use of advice and support from LEA specialist teaching services.

11. While some primary schools operated a "language across the curriculum" strategy, no school had a strategy in place for supporting children learning EAL beyond the initial stages. The longer term language development needs of such pupils were not given attention by the teachers who spoke with us, and none described strategies for supporting and enhancing their proficiency and confidence in using English for academic purposes.

Teachers

12. The mainly white pupil population of the schools was served by an almost entirely white teaching staff. Across the 14 schools in the sample there were only three minority ethnic teachers at the time of the study. A number of head teachers and other staff argued that there would be many advantages to their school in having teachers from a wider range of cultural backgrounds on the staff.

13. Very few of the teachers whom we interviewed spoke with knowledge or confidence about issues relating to multicultural education. Those who did had usually had experience in a school in a multiethnic area in the past, but more than a third had very little or no such experience to draw on.

14. There was no evidence that either initial training or in-service training had prepared the staff of the schools for the challenges of diversity that they can expect to meet with increasing frequency in the future. The teachers were interviewed before the introduction of programmes of study in Citizenship within the National Curriculum, and very few of them reported that they had attended recent courses or staff development programmes that covered issues of diversity. The focus of a large proportion of recent staff development had been central government initiatives and curriculum/syllabus change with a different emphasis.

Examples of good practice in schools

During our work in the case study schools we learned of a range of strategies that had been adopted to address some of the challenges that we have described. The following examples of good practice appeared to be worth highlighting here.

Reducing race-related bullying and name calling

- Most of the schools agreed about some aspects of good practice in dealing with race-related bullying and name-calling - investigating the incident fairly, making sure that perpetrators understood what they had done wrong, and informing parents when children were involved in persistent or malicious abuse.
- Schools were more likely to win the confidence of minority ethnic parents and children in their ability to deal with racism when the head teacher personally was seen to deal with such matters firmly themselves and to provide a lead for others on the issue. This confidence was enhanced when care was taken to inform victims and their parents of the outcome of any follow-up to a report of racist behaviour.
- All schools relied on victims and their families reporting problems to teachers. In one school with a supportive ethos effective use was made of an anonymous "Bullying Box" where children could post messages that would receive staff attention within 24 hours.
- While families rely on informal rather than formal reporting and management of racist incidents, whole family admissions policies helpfully promote sibling support.
- The secondary school where most parents and children had some degree of trust in the school's commitment to tackling race-related bullying and name calling had a formal procedure in place for recording incidents in a "Racist Incident Book", alongside its

general record of bullying problems. This permanent school record of serious incidents served to facilitate common approaches to victims and perpetrators by different members of staff and laid the basis for a systematic quality review of procedures and for the review of trends over time.

- A key objective for many teachers was to encourage individuals to reflect carefully on incidents of race-related bullying or name-calling in which they had been the perpetrator. Strategies that were employed generally in a school were sometimes put to effective use for this purpose. Examples included individual "Thinking Sheets" which had to be seen and signed by parents and had a section where the child was required to write about why what they had done had been wrong. Some teachers also used "Circle Time" to encourage groups to reflect on such incidents.

Curriculum issues and the learning environment

- The school that had made most progress towards developing a strategy for preparing pupils through the curriculum for life in a diverse society had not only invested in appropriate resources, but had also put a curriculum team structure in place to support this work.
- All children are a resource for their peers' learning, and children from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds form a resource of great potential value in schools where their experience and knowledge are not widely shared. Teaching which drew on this resource sensitively was seen by our informants as effective in conveying its planned curriculum content and as contributing to the development of mutual respect and understanding between ethnic groups.
- There was appreciation and respect among our informants for those schools which complemented their multi-faith religious education curriculum by holding some school assemblies that focused on other faith traditions besides Christianity. When this happened, minority ethnic pupils from the tradition concerned were more likely to value the event highly if it was led by a staff member or visitor speaking as a member of that faith community.
- Most of the schools had little experience of working with children who were in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. They frequently benefited from support given by their LEA's specialist teaching service to staff who were given time for this purpose, including learning support assistants.
- A significant proportion of the children whom we interviewed had started their present school or their previous school at a different time from most other pupils. Children and parents responded positively when:
  - schools appointed peer mentors with well-defined tasks and some preparation for them;
  - made effective arrangements for occasional or regular interpreting if children were at the early stages of learning English;
  - organised unobtrusive support from a classroom assistant in a primary school classroom.

Conclusion

At present mainly white schools do not adequately prepare their pupils for adult life in a society that is culturally and ethnically diverse. That is unlikely to change unless greater priority is given to that goal in national education policies and curriculum development. In working towards this end it is important that diversity within the minority ethnic population is respected. "One size fits all" solutions would create additional problems for the minority ethnic pupils and parents who participated in this study. In the current situation many children "play white" and many teachers minimise the significance and the value of cultural and ethnic diversity. Moving forward from that situation will require that teachers in mainly white schools are supported towards a fuller understanding of the range of backgrounds and perspectives that are represented in the more and more dispersed minority ethnic population of England in the 21st century.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background – the changing composition of English schools

The background for this project in the DfEE (now DfES) research brief was presented in these terms:

> *The DfEE White Paper 'Excellence in Schools' sets out the government's overriding objective of ensuring that all young people will reach the age of 16 with 'the skills, attitudes and personal qualities that will give them a secure foundation for lifelong learning, work and citizenship in a rapidly changing world'... Many minority ethnic pupils live in homogenous communities in urban areas. However a significant proportion now attend schools with few minority ethnic pupils in rural areas or predominantly white urban/suburban catchment areas. More information is required on the factors that affect the achievement of these pupils.*

For the purposes of the research the target group was defined as "minority ethnic pupils attending schools in which only 4 – 6% of pupils were from minority ethnic backgrounds".

Research on the education of minority ethnic pupils needs to move out of inner city areas because that is what the families have been doing. While it has been true that most minority ethnic families have lived in well-defined areas of major cities (Mason, 2000), the indications from schools data is that more families are now living outside these areas. Many more teachers and schools than in the past now have minority ethnic pupils. Over recent years there has been a notable increase in the number of schools with at least one minority ethnic pupil and no more than 6%. Thus by 1996/97 all secondary schools and three quarters of primary schools had at least some minority ethnic pupils, but in over two thirds of all schools the proportion of minority ethnic pupils was less than 5%. As Table 1.1 shows, between a quarter and a third of schools in unitary authorities and shire authorities had 2 - 10% minority ethnic pupils (DfEE, 1999).

Table 1.1

% schools with 2 – 10% minority ethnic pupils
(Adapted from DfEE, 1999, Table E)

	Primary schools	Secondary schools
Unitary authorities	31.5	30.7
Shire authorities	28.6	27.1

School returns in January 2000 confirmed the trend. This is illustrated at LEA level in Table 1.2. It will be seen that the only areas in the country where there were then no schools with less than 6% minority ethnic pupils was a group of London boroughs. In contrast, the only areas of the country where there were very few schools with more than 4% minority ethnic pupils were small enclaves of the north east, the south and the west. The great majority of teachers may now expect to work with minority ethnic pupils at some point in their career, and mainly white schools in almost all areas may expect to admit minority ethnic pupils more frequently than in the past.

Table 1.2 LEAs with few or no schools with 4 - 6% minority ethnic pupils		
Region	LEAs with less than three schools that have more than 4% ME pupils	LEAs with no schools that have less than 6% ME pupils
London Boroughs	None	Camden, Ealing, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Harrow, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Newham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Westminster
Yorkshire and Humberside	North East Lincolnshire	None
North East	Redcar and Cleveland, Darlington, North Tyneside	None
North West and Merseyside	Halton	None
South East	Isle of Wight	None
South West	Torbay	None
West Midlands	Herefordshire	None
East Midlands	None	None
Eastern	None	None

1.2 Outline of previous work

Influential research on the education of minority ethnic pupils has generally focused on children in multiethnic urban schools (e.g. Smith and Tomlinson, 1989; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Blair and Bourne, 1998). Earlier research and commentary on issues relating to multicultural education in schools in largely white areas have mainly focused on racism and race relations (e.g. Hopkin, 1988; Gaine, 1987, 1995; Taylor, 1995; Hamilton, Rejtman-Bennett and Roberts, 1999) or on challenges experienced by white teachers and pupils (e.g. Taylor, 1986). After reviewing some of this work and conducting his own informal studies in different part parts of the country Gaine (1995) concluded:

> *Almost all pupils, in almost all parts of the country, have considerable levels of confusion, misunderstanding, learned misinformation and ignorance about 'race'. Many have high levels of prejudice and hostility* (p. 14).

After a study of primary schools with somewhat higher proportions of minority ethnic pupils (14 - 25%) Troyna and Hatcher (1992) concluded:

> *'Race' and racism are significant features of the culture of children in predominantly white primary schools.* (p.195)

Some early authors were concerned to address the in-service training needs of the white staff in such schools (Eggleston, Dunn and Purewal, 1981) or to provide support materials to assist committed staff to develop relevant school policies (Hopkin, 1988). A study of curriculum development was undertaken by Tomlinson (1990) who analysed the impact of 23 Education Support Grant projects on education for a multi-ethnic society. In this study we planned to build on that work with a significant shift of focus. Firstly, we would give attention specifically to factors that might affect the educational achievements of the minority ethnic pupils in these settings. Secondly, we would investigate the situation from the perspectives of a range of minority ethnic pupils and parents.

1.3 Research questions

Among the questions we asked (with the chapters where they are addressed in brackets) were:

- Are there differences in levels of educational achievement between minority ethnic children in mainly white schools and children from the same ethnic backgrounds in multiethnic schools? (Chapter 2)
- Do perceptions and experiences of the school learning environment and home support differ between minority and majority ethnic children in mainly white schools? (Chapter 3)
- How do children and young people from minority ethnic groups see/experience their lives in mainly white schools? (Chapters 5, 7 – 13)
- Do minority ethnic parents have particular reasons for sending their children to mainly white schools rather than multiethnic schools? (Chapter 5)
- Do children from minority ethnic backgrounds experience race-related harassment and bullying in the schools, what measures are taken to protect them, and what level of confidence do they and their families have in what is done? (Chapter 7)
- How do minority ethnic parents and children see the relationship between their home culture and the children's school culture and between their home culture and the ethos of the neighbourhood where they live? (Chapters 5, 6, 12)
- How do teachers in the schools view the education of children and young people from minority ethnic groups? Are there areas of knowledge, competencies and resources that they perceive as essential but feel they do not have?(Chapters 8, 11)
- To what extent do curricula, school ethos and classroom practices reflect the diversity of society as a whole and meet the needs and interests of all children in the schools, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds? (Chapters 8 - 10)

1.4 Challenges in conducting research in this field

The challenge of numbers

By definition, the number of minority ethnic pupils in a mainly white school is very small. This means that organising access to a given number of pupils takes longer and is more costly. It also means that, if school effectiveness is measured in terms of pupil performance on SATs or public examinations, it is not possible to obtain reliable data on the effectiveness of individual schools in this aspect of their work. The problem can be illustrated with data from a pilot study conducted for this project.

In one pilot we worked in three primary schools and two secondary schools which all had a record of overall academic success. The index on which we compared the secondary schools was the proportion of children in all white groups and in all other groups who obtained 5 or more A* - C GSCE/GNVQ passes. From Table 1.3 it will be seen that both schools appeared to be obtaining broadly similar results with their white pupils and their minority ethnic pupils. If anything the latter group were doing slightly better than their peers. However, if just two minority ethnic pupils in School A had obtained four A* - C passes instead of five, the proportion meeting the criterion would have been 31%. We could then have (unreliably) drawn the conclusion that the school was less effective with its minority ethnic pupils than with its white pupils. An alternative index would be the mean points score per pupil (on the system in which an A* earns 8 points, an A 7 points, a B 6 points, and so on down to a G 1 point). However, while this measure offers greater discrimination, it is still liable to chance fluctuations with low numbers of pupils. In the primary schools the numbers with which we could work were even lower: a group of just 4 - 6 minority ethnic pupils in total took Key Stage 2 SATs in the previous year.

Table 1.3 GCSE/GNVQ results by ethnic background (2000)

		Less than 5 passes (A* - C)	5 or more passes (A* - C)
School A	White	93	89 (49%)
	ME/Mixed	6	7 (54%)
School B	White	66	65 (50%)
	ME/Mixed	5	7 (58%)

The low numbers present another challenge. There is every reason to suppose that patterns of educational performance in mainly white schools will vary markedly between children from different minority ethnic backgrounds, as they do in urban settings (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996, Gillborn and Mirza, 2000). In addition, it may be anticipated that, where schools that have similar overall performance profiles differ in their approach to the education of children from minority ethnic backgrounds, pupils from the same backgrounds may achieve quite different results (Nuttall, Goldstein, Prosser and Rasbash, 1989; Blair and Bourne, 1998). There are obstacles in the way of investigating these phenomena, however, because there are too few pupils from individual ethnic groups in any one school or area to allow for reliable comparison.

The challenges of definition and clarification

A separate challenge arose when we tried to clarify the subject of the research. In some early documents it was described as *ethnic minority pupils in isolated communities*. Both terms of that title raise questions of definition and clarification. We will begin with the phrase "isolated communities". In the context of the families with whom we were working, it is possible to identify two dimensions of isolation which interact:

- Ethnic/cultural isolation - the degree to which members of a family are in contact with others from the same ethnic or cultural background and maintain some elements of its social practices and traditions in their daily lives.

- Social isolation - the degree to which members of a family are in contact with neighbours or have a network of friends and social contacts in the area where they live, irrespective of ethnic/cultural background.

It quickly emerged that many of the minority ethnic families whose children attended the mainly white schools that we visited were not "isolated" in any sense. They certainly did not live in isolation from their ethnic group. Some who lived in a mainly white area maintained regular contact with a network of family, friends or co-religionists from their own ethnic background in other areas. Others lived in an area that had a substantial proportion of families from the same ethnic background but chose to send their child to school in a mainly white area. Their reasons will be examined in Chapter 5, where a sample of individual case studies of isolation and engagement may be found.

On the question of terms conventionally used for categorising ethnicity a number of previous researchers have raised concerns. (Amin et al, 1997; Richardson and Wood, 1999; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000). There are specific concerns about the generic term - *minority ethnic*. For example, Blair and Bourne (1998) stated that:

> *"This report holds to the basic assumption that a culturally homogeneous ethnic 'majority' against which minority ethnic groups are counterpoised is a myth. British society is diverse in terms of the historical, social and economic backgrounds of all its people."* (p. 14)

It is clear that some may regard the term as negative and derogatory, and we have used it reluctantly in this report because there is no widely accepted substitute. Where it appears in the text it is used as an overarching label to refer to those who would not define their ethnic identity as "white" or, in the case of the younger children, those whose families would not do so (cf. Gillborn and Gipps, 1996, p.8). (We excluded "White European" and "White Other" as well as "White British" on that basis.)

When children from diverse backgrounds attend mainly white schools, their sense of ethnic identity evolves in complex ways in response to a growing appreciation of what is shared with others and what may be different or may be seen by others as different. The subtle influences on their evolving sense of *who I am* are discussed in Chapter 5. The summary terms that are used in public debate have their roots in ways of thinking about racial groups that belong to the past and are not a comfortable tool for discussing these dynamics. When describing individual families' ethnic background, we have tried to use the terms that they used or terms that we believe they would accept. But when generalising about larger groups of people, that has not usually been possible.

For practical purposes, if inequalities are to be tackled and ethnic monitoring is to be effective, the authorities need to ask people to ascribe single summary labels to themselves. Schools generally avoid putting pupils in a position where they are required to highlight their ethnic identity in this way. There has been relatively little research on children's self-ascribed ethnic identities. In an investigation of adolescent discourse on national identity Carrington and Short (1998) showed that minority ethnic participants were more likely than those who were white to qualify or "hyphenate" their account of their own national identity by adding a reference to their religion or to their parents' country of origin. In Chapter 3 we will report on the response of a large group of children when a questionnaire survey required them to complete a personal information sheet that included a question on ethnic background. If a consensus is to be developed on the use of new summary terms that will be more generally accepted, it will be important to take account of young people's perspectives on the issue.

Problems of terminology and definition are also raised in connection with pupils with a dual or mixed ethnic background who represent a rising proportion of children nationally (Tizard and Phoenix, 1993). During a pilot study in five schools we found that up to a third of the pupils who did not tick a "white" category on the personal information sheet chose the term "mixed" to define their background. These figures were much higher than we had anticipated, and, even if they were inflated by confusion over an unfamiliar task, they suggest that possibly the proportions of children from a dual or mixed background may be greater in mainly white schools than in schools in multiethnic areas. Currently there is no firm data on this question, but the distribution of people who have mixed and dual heritage backgrounds may become clearer when the results of the recent census are analysed. In any case, as far as this project was concerned, the Steering Group agreed that in subsequent case study work we should pay greater attention than had originally been envisaged to children who see themselves as having a dual or mixed heritage background. It was recognised that, if a better understanding was to be achieved of factors affecting achievement in schools with 4 – 6% minority ethnic pupils, it would be important to include coverage of this group. To clarify our use of terminology we should make clear that, where the terms *dual heritage* or *mixed heritage* are used in the text below, they refer to individuals who have two parents from different ethnic backgrounds. One of the parents may be white, or both may be from minority ethnic backgrounds. Of course, that then raises further questions about the use of the term *minority ethnic*. For the purposes of this report it is taken to include people who have a dual or mixed ethnic heritage.

1.5 The structure of the research

To address the questions listed above in Section 2 it was necessary to conduct the research in three parts, and these were carried out in parallel. Part 1 focused on the questions about educational performance. LEAs were approached to provide data on Key Stage 2 and GCSE results in all schools in the authority's area with 4 – 6% minority ethnic pupils. This was a large scale survey involving the collation of results obtained by over 34,000 pupils in 35 local authority areas. It is reported in detail in Chapter 2.

Parts 2 and 3 focused on a small sample of 14 schools in four regions of the country. These schools each had 4 – 6% minority ethnic pupils but otherwise varied in size, type of catchment area and performance. Our work involved Years 3 – 6 in primary schools and Years 7 – 9 in secondary schools. In Part 2 both white and minority ethnic pupils in that age range completed a questionnaire survey that explored their perceptions of life at school and of home support for their education. This survey is reported in Chapter 3. The third part of the study, which was the most substantial, focused on minority ethnic children exclusively. We interviewed a small number of pupils in each school, their parents and selected teachers. A review of the literature, discussions with the project steering group and initial pilot work identified a wide range of issues that seemed relevant to the research questions listed above. Structured interview protocols sampled stakeholders' perspectives on a subset of these issues, allowing for triangulation between linked informants. During the final stage of the research teachers in the case study schools were given feedback on draft findings so that the final version could take account of their further comments. The research process in the case study schools is described in more detail in Chapter 4. The remaining chapters of the report provide a full account of the case study findings.

Chapter 2 Results achieved by minority ethnic pupils in mainly white schools

Summary

The research question addressed in this section are:

- Are there differences in levels of educational achievement between minority ethnic children in mainly white schools and children from the same ethnic backgrounds in multiethnic schools?

The principal findings reported here are:

- A survey of the performance of over 34,000 pupils in mainly white schools in 35 LEAs indicated that children from a White background in mainly white schools outperformed those in urban multiethnic schools in Key Stage 2 SATs and GCSE exams - presumably because these schools were in socially more advantaged areas.

- Children from Black Caribbean, Indian and Pakistani backgrounds in the same schools also outperformed their urban counterparts at GCSE level but *not* at the end of Key Stage 2. Children from minority ethnic backgrounds shared in whatever educational advantages were available in these schools to the same degree as children from a White background in secondary school but not in primary school.

- In many schools and LEAs this data was either not available or unreliable, mainly because of uncertainties around the recording of pupils' ethnic background.

2.1 Background to the survey

This chapter reports a survey of the performance of pupils from different ethnic groups in schools with 4 – 6% minority ethnic pupils. Our aim was to compare the results achieved by minority ethnic pupils in these schools with results reported for them in schools with a higher proportion of children from minority ethnic backgrounds. This presented some problems. At present the educational achievements of pupils from different minority ethnic groups are not reported on a national basis. The DfES has piloted a Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), and eventually this system will make it possible to collect national data annually.

For the purposes of this report we surveyed a sample of LEAs and sought information on the performance of each group of pupils in a list of schools that DfES records showed to have had 4 – 6% minority ethnic pupils in the year 2000. This information was then compared with data from schools in London where ethnic minorities had a larger presence. We focused on performance in national assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 and on GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4. These represent performance

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indicators at significant points of transition in the education process. The data must be treated with caution for a number of reasons, such as low numbers in key groups, variations in practice between authorities and change over time in groups' mean performance. A fuller account of these issues is given in the Discussion at the end of the chapter.

With the exception of the Youth Cohort Study (Demack et al, 2000; Cabinet Office, 2001), all the surveys that we used for reference data were carried out at local level. They almost all focused on areas where there were substantial minority ethnic populations. We could find no locally published data on the performance of minority ethnic pupils in mainly white schools. Table 2.1 outlines the "high minority ethnic" populations sampled in those published reports we could trace that presented data from the last five years for the age groups in which we were interested.[1]

Table 2.1 Recent reports of the educational performance of minority ethnic pupils at the end of Key Stage 2

	Report	*Areas covered (Year cohort in brackets)*	*Subject covered for KS2/ statistics reported for GCSE*
Key Stage 2	Tower Hamlets (1998)	London Borough of Tower Hamlets (1997)	English, Mathematics and Science
	Richardson and Wood (1999)	10 London LEAs (1998)	English, Mathematics
	Demie (2001)	An inner London borough (1998)	Average of results for English, Mathematics and Science
GCSE	Youth Cohort Study (Cabinet Office, 2001)	National sample (2000)	% achieving 5+ passes with higher grades (A* - C); average exam score taking account of all pass grades (A*- G)
	Tower Hamlets (1998)	London Borough of Tower Hamlets (1997)	% achieving 5+ passes with higher grades (A* - C); average exam score taking account of all pass grades (A*- G)
	Richardson and Wood (1999)	13 London LEAs (1998)	% achieving 5+ passes with higher grades (A* - C)
	Demie (2001)	An Inner London borough (1998)	% achieving 5+ passes with higher grades (A* - C)
	McCallum and Demie (2001)	An Inner London borough (1999)	% achieving 5+ passes with higher grades (A* - C)

It will be noted that the selected local reports all come from London. Our intention was to investigate whether the results achieved by minority ethnic pupils differ in mainly white schools from those that have been reported from areas where there are relatively high concentrations of minority ethnic children. In Greater London in 1999 approximately 40% of all school children were from minority ethnic backgrounds. No other region exceeded 15% (DfEE, 1999). We examined one report of the results achieved by children

[1] When considering primary school performance we were not able to make use of some careful work which concentrated on attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 rather than Key Stage 2. For example, the review of primary school performance by Gillborn and Gipps (1996) focused on Key Stage 1 performance, as did a study in a single LEA by Strand (1999).

in a city in the North of England and found the data of considerable interest. However, it was eventually rejected for inclusion in our comparison sample because minority ethnic pupils formed only 12% of the total cohort taking Key Stage 2 assessments in 2000 and 11% of those taking GCSE. In fact the city had five secondary schools and nearly 40 primary schools with fewer than 6% ME pupils. Thus the population was quite different from that which was recorded for the London LEAs and could not be said to provide a "high minority ethnic" contrast to our "low minority ethnic" sample.

While no studies focused specifically on areas with low proportions of minority ethnic pupils, one survey did include some areas of this kind. Gillborn and Mirza (2000) analysed data supplied to the DfEE by 118 LEAs as part of their submission for the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant in 1999. We noted that some of the authorities where a particular group did relatively well were authorities where the numbers of that group were quite low: *"Of all authorities where Black Caribbean pupils were highest attaining, the LEA with the largest secondary school population in that category counted around 200 pupils in 1998. For Black African pupils the figure was less than 100 pupils; Black Other, around 200; Indian, more than 1,000; Pakistani around 300; and Bangladeshi, more than 1,000."* (p.11) This suggested the possibility that minority ethnic pupils' performance in mainly white schools might compare favourably with that of their peers in schools with a more balanced ethnic intake. Our survey was designed to investigate whether that was the case.

2.2 Survey of minority ethnic pupils' results in mainly white schools

How do the results that minority ethnic pupils achieve in mainly white schools compare with the results they achieve in schools with a higher proportion of children from minority ethnic backgrounds? In order to answer this question we needed to obtain performance data for "low ME" schools broken down by ethnic group. There is currently serious concern at national level about the workloads imposed on teachers, and for that reason the Department places constraints on the number of additional requests for information that may be put to schools in support of research that it sponsors. So it was decided to seek the information that was required through LEAs. In order to reduce the burden on hard-pressed local authority staff they were invited to supply the data in whatever format (electronic or hard copy) they found most convenient. The research team offered to reimburse any additional costs that were incurred in terms of copying or staff time. Assurances were given about confidentiality.

Each LEA was given a list of primary and secondary schools in the area that were recorded as having 4 - 6% minority ethnic pupils in 1999. For each primary school they were asked to supply data on the school's Key Stage 2 SATs results in the core subjects in 1999/00. For secondary schools that information was requested for the schools' GCSE results. In both cases the results were to be presented separately for each ethnic group. We examined the numbers of pupils achieving 5 or more passes at grades A* - C and the total point scores for the examinations.

We supplied a set of tables that the LEA could use if it wished, but indicated that different formats could be used if more convenient. We employed the list of ethnic categories used in the 1991 National Census which had been used nationally for data collection from schools in the years in which we were interested:

White
Black Caribbean
Black African
Black Other
Indian
Pakistani
Bangladeshi
Chinese
Any other minority ethnic groups[2]

Where an LEA did not employ exactly the same list of ethnic group categories, they were able to send in the data in the form in which they held it. In most cases we were able to adapt such data to the format in which we could collate it with that which others had provided. For example, where an authority had simply added a category that we did not plan to include, such as Travellers, we omitted those results from our database. Where they had broken down one category such as White into smaller groups such as White UK, White European and White Other, we amalgamated them before transferring the data.

A sample of authorities was selected on the basis that, according to DfES records for 1999, each of them had a significant number of schools with 4 – 6% minority ethnic pupils. All 44 English LEAs with 10 or more schools in this category were approached, plus a sample of 19 LEAs with 3 – 9 such schools to broaden representation of types of authority. These were mainly smaller metropolitan district and unitary authorities. Returns were received from 38 authorities. Two data sets could not be used at all because of defective or missing data, and 15 authorities provided usable data for only one Key Stage. There were various reasons why a data set could not be used. These included that the information on results was not disaggregated by ethnic group for every school, that the sum of the disaggregated ethnic group figures did not match the total minority ethnic number in the school population, and that the data for only one subject was provided at Key Stage 2.

The overall response rate with usable data was 57% with higher response rates from metropolitan authorities (69%), London boroughs (71%) and unitary authorities (72%). The response rate from shire authorities (32%) was rather lower than from other types of authority. But, as noted above, those global figures conceal a problem in the data returns in that only 21 authorities provided usable data for both Key Stage 2 and GCSE results. The data from 11 other authorities was usable for only Key Stage 2 and not GCSE, and the data from 4 authorities was usable for GCSE only. Thus the overall rate of return for Key Stage 2 was only 51% and for GCSE was only 40%. The findings should be interpreted with this limitation in mind.

[2] As noted in Chapter 1, difficulties were experienced with this system, and a different category system was introduced for the 2001 census.

The response rate did not vary between different regions of the country. We did note a tendency for a lower rate of response in authorities with relatively high numbers of schools for which data was requested, including the authorities covering some very large urban areas and large counties. Presumably there was a disincentive in these authorities because much more work was needed to produce the requested data. For the authorities that did reply with usable data Table 2.2 shows the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or better at the Key Stage 2, and Table 2.3 gives the data for GCSE results. It should be noted that the survey of LEAs only sought information on children's performance. For this reason the data that we received did not allow speculation as to the cause of the inconsistency between Key Stage 2 and GCSE results for specific results, e.g. children from Indian and Chinese backgrounds.

Table 2.2 Percentage of children achieving Level 4 or better at the end of Key Stage 2 in schools with 4 – 6% minority ethnic pupils in 2000 in 32 LEAs

Ethnic Group	English		Mathematics	
	Total no. of pupils	% assessed Level 4+	Total no. of pupils	% assessed Level 4+
White	15,104	87	15,119	82
Black Caribbean	83	30	76	38
Black African	37	62	35	54
Black Other	60	55	60	57
Indian	211	58	208	58
Pakistani	96	49	96	47
Bangladeshi	27	*	24	*
Chinese	74	55	81	51
Any other ethnic group	575	63	577	63
Total	16,267	85	16,276	80

* If a group's total size was less than 30, its results were excluded from the analysis, as it was considered that averaging performance data would yield unreliable results.

Table 2.3 Results achieved in GCSE in schools with 4 – 6% minority ethnic pupils in 2000 in 24 LEAs

Ethnic Group	Total no. of pupils	% with 5+ Grades A* - C	% with 1+ Grades A* - G
White	16,678	51	95
Black Caribbean	96	40	94
Black African	50	60	94
Black Other	42	38	88
Indian	381	69	99
Pakistani	158	45	98
Bangladeshi	24	*	*
Chinese	70	77	99
Any other ethnic group	412	63	92
Total	17,911	52	95

* If a group's total size was less than 30, its results were excluded from the analysis.

2.3 Comparison between results in mainly white schools and results in schools with a higher proportion of minority ethnic pupils

Our aim in carrying out this survey was to answer the question: how do the results achieved by minority ethnic pupils in mainly white schools compare with results reported for them in schools with a higher proportion of children from minority ethnic backgrounds? There are defects in the data covering both parts of this comparison, but it is now possible to examine the question. Summary data are presented in Tables 2.4 and 2.5. These tables feature fewer ethnic groups than Tables 2.2 and 2.3. This is because our own data on Bangladeshi pupils had to be rejected because of low group size and adequate comparison data was not available for other groups such as Black African and Chinese. So the comparisons focus on four ethnic groups – White, Black Caribbean, Indian and Pakistani.

Table 2.4 Percentages of pupils achieving Level 4 at Key Stage 2

		All children	White	* Black Caribbean	Indian	Pakistani
English	Low ME schools in this survey (2000)	85%	87%	30%	58%	49%
	Tower Hamlets (1997)	46%	54%*	50%	-	-
	10 London LEAs (1998)**	55 - 74%	51 – 76%	53 – 71%	62 – 93%	50 – 70%
Maths	Low ME schools in this survey (2000)	80%	82%	38%	58%	47%
	Tower Hamlets (1997)	51%	61%*	49	-	-
	10 London LEAs (1998)**	48 - 65%	52 – 73%	37 – 66%	56 – 87%	42 – 70%
Average across subjects	One London borough (1998)***	54%	60%*	47%	66%	67%

* In these LEAs at that time this group was described as "English, Scottish and Welsh" and did not include children from other white groups.

** Reported in Richardson and Wood (1999).

*** Reported in Demie (2001).

It will be seen from Table 2.4 that at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2000 in both English and Mathematics children in the white group performed markedly better in "low ME" schools (i.e. schools with low numbers of minority ethnic pupils) than children in this group had done in London schools 2 - 3 years earlier. On the other hand, children in low ME schools

from Black Caribbean, Indian and Pakistani backgrounds did *not* do better than their London counterparts had done. So the children in these groups, on average, did not show the performance enhancement that the White British group enjoyed as a result of living in the more favoured areas of the country where the low ME schools were situated.

Table 2.5 shows that GCSE results in the schools do not follow the same pattern. The proportions of children achieving 5+ higher grade GCSE results in the low ME schools are at the upper end of the range achieved by the London children for each of the ethnic groups for which data is available. In this case it appears that the children from minority ethnic backgrounds *did* share in whatever educational advantages were available to the same degree as white children. Our data do not provide the basis for speculating as to why the Key Stage 4 results differ in this respect from the Key Stage 2 results.

Table 2.5 Percentages of pupils achieving 5+ higher grade passes in GCSE

	All children	White	Black Caribbean	Indian	Pakistani
Low ME schools in this survey (2000)	52%	51%	40%	69%	45%
National sample in Youth Cohort Study (2000)	49%	50%	*	62%	30%
Results for one Inner London borough (1999)**	32%	37%***	22%	-	-
Results in 13 LEAs in London (1998)****	23 -53%	24-50%	12 - 32%	52-62%	30 - 67%
Results for one Inner London borough in 1998*****	37%	40%***	26%	-	-
Tower Hamlets results (1997)	26%	19%***	16%	-	-

* Researchers working on the Youth Cohort Study employ a slightly different set of ethnic categories and include Black Caribbean, Black African and Black Other within a single category of "Black" (P.I.U., 2001). Since there are significant differences in performance between the three groups comparison with our data is not possible.

** Reported by McCallum and Demie (2001).

*** In these LEAs this group is described as "English, Scottish and Welsh".

**** Reported by Richardson and Wood (1999).

***** Reported by Demie (2001).

It was not possible to examine interactions between gender and ethnicity as factors in these results, as most LEAs were not at that time collecting data by gender. Nor did we attempt to examine the impact of limited fluency in English as a separate factor. Socioeconomic status could have had a specific effect on the results if, as seems possible, the minority ethnic population of mainly white schools differs in terms of parents' occupational status or eligibility for free school meals from the population in schools with a more diverse ethnic intake. The mean figure for the Free School Meals index in the LEAs in this sample was lower than that for Greater London from which the comparison

data was taken. It would be desirable to carry out a more detailed analysis of the results achieved in mainly white schools once the full introduction of the Pupil Level Annual School Census makes that possible. The impact of socioeconomic status should then be examined as a possible intervening factor in these results.

Discussion

It was not expected that the trend in these findings would differ between Key Stage 4 (where minority ethnic pupils shared in the educational advantages of their white classmates) and Key Stage 2 (where they did not share that advantage). Both because of the low response rate from shire authorities and because of the possible impact of socioeconomic factors the results should be interpreted with caution, pending confirmatory evidence from future studies. There are additional reasons for care in this field. A number of earlier authors have outlined reservations when presenting their data. This list highlights the chief concerns they expressed that have been borne out by our experience in attempting to collate the information in this survey:

(a) Although the total sample size in many of the relevant studies is large, the numbers of children from a particular ethnic minority group is sometimes quite small (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000, p.13).

(b) There are minor differences between studies in the categorisation of ethnic groups. This means that great care is required when interpreting comparisons between results from studies in different areas.

(c) While overall performance has been improving across the board on such indices as the proportion of young people attaining five or more GCSE Grades A* - C, the rate of improvement has varied between ethnic groups (Cabinet Office, 2001, Table 1).

(d) The attainments of minority ethnic groups are often described in terms of stereotyped expectations that a group whose members tend to do well or badly in one geographical area will tend to achieve similar results elsewhere. There are good reasons for countering such stereotypes. For example, on the basis of a review of statistical returns for the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant from 118 LEAs, Gilborn and Mirza (2000) concluded that, whilst there were "*significant and consistent inequalities of attainment... for many of the principal minority groups*", there was also a good deal of local variability in the relative standing of these groups. "*For each of the principal minority groups there is at least one authority where they attain higher than the other groups*" (p. 11).

(e) The performance of a group in a particular area may be heavily influenced by the socioeconomic composition of the group in that area. But, even when an index of family poverty is controlled, significant inequalities of attainment still appear between some ethnic groups (Gilborn and Mirza, 2000, p. 20; Demie, 2001, p. 92). To complicate the picture further, a study in one London borough has suggested that there may be differences between ethnic groups in the degree to which socioeconomic variation has an impact on educational performance (McCallum and Demie, 2001, p. 154).

(f) Gender has been shown to have a significant impact on the attainments of all ethnic groups (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Demie, 2001), though gender differences overall are smaller than ethnic differences. For example, in 1997 "*the gap between boys and girls attaining five or more higher grade (GCSE) passes was 9 percentage points; the Black/White gap was 18 percentage points.*" (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000, p. 23)

(g) Among pupils who are learning English as an additional language the performance of those in the early stages of English fluency is lowest. This will have considerable impact on the overall scores of groups that have a relatively high proportion of children in that position (Tower Hamlets, 1998).

In this report we have attempted to make clear how far it has been possible to address these issues. In some cases we could not do so. For example, information on the gender of the pupils and their stage of English fluency was not available from the LEAs. It will be important that all the factors in the list are given attention when it becomes possible to investigate minority ethnic group performance on the basis of data from the Pupil Level Annual School Census.

Chapter 3 Questionnaire survey in case study schools

Summary

The research question addressed in this chapter is:

- Do perceptions and experiences of the school learning environment and home support differ between white and minority ethnic children in mainly white schools?

The principal findings reported here are:

- A questionnaire survey of 2,885 white and 217 minority ethnic pupils in a sample of 14 mainly white schools indicated that 26% of the minority ethnic pupils had experienced race-related name calling or verbal abuse at school or while travelling to and from school during the previous week.
- The positive and negative perceptions of school of white and minority ethnic pupils were closely similar in most respects. White children were slightly more likely to give positive responses overall, but they were also more likely to give a negative response on an academic topic. The two items which the minority ethnic children mentioned more often than the white group were preparation for later life and bullying.

3.1 Introduction

The LEA survey in Chapter 2 focused on pupils' educational achievements. A study of what lies behind those achievements must, among other things, explore how they view their situation at school. In the first instance we wished to investigate the perceptions of *all* pupils, those in the white majority group in the schools as well as those of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. On the basis of our own earlier work and of a review of the literature we decided to focus specifically on their perception of three phenomena:

- the learning environment in school (Frederickson and Cline, 2002, Chapter 8);
- social support and social rejection in school (Troyna and Hatcher, 1992; Hamilton, Rejtman-Bennett and Roberts, 1999)
- the support received from home with preparation for school and school work (Abreu, Cline and Shamsi, 2002).

There are good reasons for believing that other factors may be important (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Suaraez-Orozco and Suaraez-Orozco, 2001). However, some of these affect all minority ethnic pupils, not specifically those in mainly white schools, and are already well documented (e.g. children's views of themselves as a learner at school).

It was decided to carry out a questionnaire survey on a substantial scale in the schools where we were subsequently to carry out individual case studies. The survey data would provide background information about the school context which could inform the more intensive work with individuals. In the event the time limitations on the project meant that the analysis of the questionnaire data was not completed until after the case study

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interviews. The advantage of this was that the evidence provided by these two elements of the research programme was independent: we were not influenced in our interviewing by any preconceptions deriving from the questionnaire results. It will be seen later that, in the event, the two sources of data pointed in the same direction on a number of key issues.

3.2 Method

Participants

The selection of the schools and summary information about them are described in the next chapter where you will also find summary information about them. Children in Years 3 - 9 participated in the questionnaire survey on the basis of form/class groups. (Across the sample eleven classes or forms were omitted because administration errors.) Details of the participants are given in Table 3.1. Details of ethnic background are given here (employing the category system that was in use in the schools at the time), but it should be noted that low numbers in the various groups made it impossible to analyse the results by ethnicity. Therefore for the purposes of analysis minority ethnic groups were combined into one composite group. Children who did not wish their ethnic group to be recorded were omitted from the analysis.

Table 3.1 Respondents in the questionnaire survey

Gender	
Boys	1,546 (49%)
Girls	1,587 (51%)
Age (in years)	
7	45 (1%)
8	287 (9%)
9	309 (10%)
10	333 (11%)
11	403 (13%)
12	623 (20%)
13	681 (22%)
14	452 (14%)
Ethnic background	
White	2,885 (92%)
Mixed	103
Asian or Asian British	63
Black or Black British	27
Chinese or other Chinese ethnic group	24
All minority ethnic	217 (6.9%)[3]
Did not wish their ethnic group to be recorded	31
Total	3,133

[3] The most recent data from the DfES from 1999 showed these schools to have 4 - 6% minority ethnic pupils. This proportion had increased slightly by 2000 when the data was collected.

Materials

A pilot study was carried out in five schools that had 4 - 6% minority ethnic pupils. This led to the development of simpler and shorter enquiry materials. The Booklet that was given to each child had the title *My Class and School* with four parts:

- Inventory 1 - *It Happened To Me At School*
- A single sheet with two open-ended questions – *What I Think About School*
- Inventory 2 - *Home and School Scale*
- A Personal Information sheet on which they recorded age, gender and ethnic background (employing the category system for ethnicity that was in use in the schools at the time)

There were separate versions for use in primary and secondary schools with slightly simpler wording for the younger children.

The *It Happened To Me At School (IHTMAS)* Scale was developed on the basis of previous work on inventories of bullying and social exclusion. It drew particularly on work that had been done on the *My Life in School Checklist* but was reduced in length to just 28 items (Arora and Thompson, 1987; Whitney and Smith, 1993; Sharp, 1999). On the basis of the pilot its balance was altered with more items designed to investigate children's reports of experiences of name calling and social exclusion, especially race-related name-calling. The new separate indices that were defined are shown in Table 3.2 with examples of the items that comprised each index.

Table 3.2 Indices of the *It Happened To Me At School* Scale

Index	*Illustrative item*
Bullying and aggression (6 items)	Tried to hit me
Name calling and social exclusion (6 items)	Turned my friends against me
Racism (3 items)	Was rude about the colour of my skin
Social inclusion (6 items)	Played a game with me
Practical support (3 items)	Lent me something

The *What I Think About School* task required children to write down three things they liked about school and why and three things they disliked about school and why. Each child was scored up to a maximum of 3 for the frequency with which they gave responses in the categories illustrated in Table 3.3. That list presents only those categories that were employed by sufficient children to be included in the analysis.

Table 3.3 Scoring of the *What I like about school* Scale		
Items	*Positive example*	*Negative example*
Social	"I get to see my friends"	"That we have to sit in register order and nerly all the time next to a boy"
Bullying and name calling		"People calling me names"
Teachers	"They have nice teachers"	"Bad, arrogant teachers"
Academic (incl. individual subjects)	"Geography because I know every capital in the world"	"Science because it boring"
Activities outside the classroom/ timetable	"Netball club after school"	"Dinner play time because it is long and some times I have know won to play with me"
Prepares you for later life	"I like to be encouraged to focus on school and work so I can get a good job when I am older"	
Miscellaneous	"Gives you something to do each day"	"I hate not being aloud on the grass"

The *Home and School Scale* was designed to indicate children's perceptions of how their families advised and supported them in relation to their schooling. It was based on a somewhat longer inventory, the Educational Socialization Scale, which Bempechat, Graham and Jiminez (1999) had developed for use in a North American community. For our purposes some of their items were anglicised, some were omitted, and additions were made. The key themes in the new scale overlapped with the original but were not identical. The twelve main items covered four aspects of home support. These are shown in Table 3.4 which again gives illustrative examples of the items that comprised each index.

Table 3.4 Indices of the Home and School Scale	
Index	Illustrative item My parents or someone else at home:
1 Emphasis on preparing for the future	Talk about different kinds of jobs I can have when I grow up.
2 Readiness to teach at home	Help me with my homework.
3 Reliance on punishment or threat	Stop me doing something I like when I get bad marks in school.
4 Emphasis on needing to make an effort	Say I could do better in school if I worked harder.

A question was added to obtain the children's comments on *who* within their household usually helped them with their homework. Earlier work had indicated that there were marked ethnic group differences in sources of support at primary school level in an urban setting (Abreu et al, 2002). Would the same patterns emerge with a wider age range and a sample that was more dispersed geographically and attending mainly white schools?

Procedure

The questionnaire was administered by a class teacher or form tutor (except in one secondary school where it was the form's regular English teacher). It was explained that the aim of the project was to help the research team learn what pupils think about their lives at school and thus help those who are responsible for Education to make sure that everyone has the best possible start in life at school. For all pupils it was made clear that what they wrote in the booklets would not be seen by anyone in the school. The children did not enter their names in the booklets. It was also made clear that there were no right or wrong answers: each pupil was to give the answer that was personally right for him or her as an individual. Teachers were asked not to allow class discussion of answers. However, different administration procedures were adopted in primary and secondary schools.

In primary schools teachers were asked to take their pupils through the booklet as they completed it. The teacher read the items aloud to the class and did not allow discussion of the answers. In secondary schools the same principles applied, but teachers were asked not to take their pupils through the booklet as they completed it. They helped only those pupils who asked for clarification. All pupils had an assurance that the responses they gave would be anonymous as they were each issued with an envelope in which they placed their booklet after completing it. They themselves sealed the envelope.

3.3 Results

For each scale we present an overview of key findings in relation to (a) differences between white and minority ethnic pupils, (b) boys and girls, and (c) primary and secondary pupils.

It Happened To Me At School (IHTMAS)

The minority ethnic group recorded markedly higher scores on the Racism index. 26% of the minority ethnic pupils said that during the previous week they had experienced unkindness or rudeness because they were different, because of their accent or because of the colour of their skin (see Table 3.5). However, little difference was found between the white and minority ethnic groups in terms of overall scores on the other indices.

Table 3.5 Comparison of % minority ethnic and % white pupils' reports of various experiences during the previous week		
Reported experiencing:	*Minority ethnic*	*White*
Bullying and aggression	64 (30%)	749 (26%)
Name calling and social exclusion	64 (30%)	849 (29%)
Racism	56 (26%)	336 (12%)
Social inclusion	186 (86%)	2,534 (88%)
Practical support	174 (80%)	2,367 (82%)

The results on this scale showed the overall gender differences that would have been predicted on the basis of the literature. For example, boys ticked bullying and aggression items more than girls did, but the two groups did not differ in the frequency with which they reported name calling and social exclusion. These gender patterns were the same in the white group and the minority ethnic group, as shown in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 Comparison of % minority ethnic and % white boys' and girls' reports of various experiences during the previous week				
Index	*Boys*		*Girls*	
	Minority Ethnic	*White*	*Minority Ethnic*	*White*
Bullying and Aggression	36	34	22	18
Name Calling and Social Exclusion	30	30	30	29
Racism	29	13	22	10
Social Inclusion	87	87	84	88
Practical Support	77	78	84	86

We also compared the scores obtained by primary and secondary pupils. There was a slight tendency for younger pupils to report more negative experiences on the first three indices (bullying and aggression, etc.), and these differences were more marked among minority ethnic pupils than among white pupils, as shown in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 Comparison of % minority ethnic and % white primary and secondary pupils' reports of various experiences during the previous week				
Index	*Primary*		*Secondary*	
	Minority Ethnic	*White*	*Minority Ethnic*	*White*
Bullying and Aggression	34	38	27	34
Name Calling and Social Exclusion	37	34	25	26
Racism	35	13	25	11
Social Inclusion	86	87	86	88
Practical Support	77	77	82	86

What I Think About School (WITAS)

This part of the questionnaire booklet investigated children's positive and negative perceptions of school through open-ended questions. When children from white and minority ethnic backgrounds were compared, there were very small differences between the groups. The two items which the minority ethnic children mentioned more often than the white group were preparation for later life and bullying, as shown in Table 3.8. White pupils mentioned disliking some academic aspects of school more than did minority ethnic pupils.

Table 3.8 % WITAS responses in each category by ethnic background

Positive items	*Minority ethnic*	*White*	*Negative items*	*Minority ethnic*	*White*
Social	66	69	Social	18	17
			Bullying	30	23
Teachers	27	32	Teachers	36	36
Academic	63	68	Academic	46	58
Activities outside the classroom	30	32	Activities outside the classroom	17	17
Preparation for later life	11	5			
Miscellaneous	21	20	Miscellaneous	35	38

When gender was examined, we found that in both white and minority ethnic groups girls exceeded boys in their positive references to individual teachers (a gender difference of 12% in the white group and 16% in the minority ethnic group). When negative items about dislikes in school were examined, girls and boys did not differ in the white group. But in the minority ethnic group girls were 7 - 8% more likely to mention two negative items than boys – individual teachers and academic.

When age was examined, we found that older children mentioned the academic category and individual teachers less often in a positive light and more often in a negative light than children at primary school. Older children, and especially those in the minority ethnic group, were more likely to talk about school positively in terms of preparation for later life. Even so this category still comprised only 7% of the total statements at secondary school (14% in the minority ethnic group).

Home and School Scale (HSS)

This scale investigated children's perceptions of how their families advised and supported them in relation to their schooling. The four subscales concerned the emphasis that was put on preparing for the future, the family's readiness to teach the child at home, the parents' reliance on punishment or threat and the emphasis they placed on the child needing to make an effort at school. As can be seen in Table 3.9, minority ethnic pupils were slightly more likely to report that there was an emphasis at home on preparing for the future and on the need to make an effort. The group differences did not reach statistical significance, but the trend was in the direction predicted by previous research. There were slightly larger and statistically significant differences between the groups on the other two subscales. White pupils tended to say that they were helped at home more often than minority ethnic pupils, while minority ethnic pupils said punishments and threats were used more often to encourage them to succeed in school.

Table 3.9 Mean scores on subscales of the *Home and School* Scale			
			Independent t test
	Minority ethnic	*White*	
Emphasis on preparing for the future	7.65	7.37	t = -1.59, p = .06
Readiness to teach at home	8.29	8.59	t = 1.78, p = .04
Reliance on punishment or threat	6.14	5.80	t = -2.09, p = .02
Emphasis placed on making an effort at school	8.20	7.93	t = -1.54, p = .06

The additional question about who usually helped the children with their homework showed some differences between the white and minority ethnic groups. All the children were much more likely to cite one of their parents as helping them than any other source of support. Fathers were mentioned less often by minority ethnic pupils who were more likely to say that they were helped by siblings than white children were. (See Table 3.10.)

Table 3.10 % children naming different people as helping them with school work at home		
	Minority ethnic	*White*
Brother	9	5
Sister	12	7
Mother	45	46
Father	28	36
Grandmother	2	2
Grandfather	1	1
Friend	0	1
Another person	3	1

3.4 Discussion

Children are not normally required to answer questions about their ethnic background in school, and there was a concern that addressing this taboo topic might be unsettling or disturbing for some. The teachers who supervised the pilot study did report infrequent problems of pupils objecting to the exercise, but after the form for recording ethnicity was redesigned, less than 1% of respondents indicated that they did not wish their ethnic group to be recorded.

A second concern was about accuracy: would the children's responses be in line with those of adults? Since no names were recorded on the booklets, this could not be checked individually. However, as all the schools were listed as having 4 – 6% minority ethnic pupils, it is possible to check the figures recorded on the questionnaires against that official statistic. It can be calculated from Table 3.1 that the total proportion of pupils describing themselves as from a minority ethnic background was 6.9%. This figure is not far outside the range of what might have been expected. We noted, though, that those describing themselves as having a "Mixed" background formed an unexpectedly high

proportion of this group (47% of all pupils describing themselves as belonging to a minority ethnic group). It is not impossible that this accurately reflects a shift in the population of catchment areas of mainly white schools. The forthcoming census reports will help to clarify the position. However, another explanation for the finding would be that some children who described themselves as coming from a mixed background were responding to the ambiguities and uncertainties that affect perceptions of ethnic identity generally. Further questions raised by this observation will be discussed in Chapter 11.

Although the children recorded their ethnic background, it was not possible to analyse the results by ethnicity because of the low numbers in each group. The combination of all minority ethnic pupils in a single group for the purposes of analysis must always be seen as a disadvantage. There are important differences between groups that are masked by this procedure. Fortunately, the main purpose of this survey was to explore issues on which children from minority ethnic groups generally were predicted to have different perceptions from the majority white group in mainly white schools. These included the basis for reports of experiencing social support and social rejection in school, and their experience of the support received from home with preparation for school and school work. While there would almost certainly be group differences within the minority ethnic population of the schools, the first challenge was to investigate whether there were differences between majority and minority groups overall. As we noted in Chapter 1, previous studies did not explore this question.

The most striking single finding from the *It Happened To Me At School* scale was that a quarter of the minority ethnic pupils reported that during the previous week they had experienced racism in the form of unkindness or rudeness because they were different, because of their accent or because of the colour of their skin (see Table 3.5). This is in line with earlier reports of race-related bullying and name-calling in mainly white schools (e.g. Troyna and Hatcher, 1992; Hamilton et al, 1999). In their responses to *What I Think About School* children from minority ethnic backgrounds mentioned bullying as something they disliked about school markedly more often than white children did (see Table 3.7). Although respondents were not told that minority ethnic pupils were the focus of the study, some children from white as well as minority ethnic backgrounds highlighted concerns about racism. For example, in Year 9 of a mixed secondary school two girls who recorded their background as White British included among the things they disliked at school:

Racist attacks

The racism, discrimination and bullying I see at school

A Year 7 boy in the same school who came from a minority ethnic background wrote:

Sometimes people talk behind my back because of the colour of my skin.

In a rare comment on teacher racism a Year 9 boy in that school wrote that he disliked:

Art because it's far too hard and the teacher is racist.

The perceptions of racism in the schools among minority ethnic pupils and their parents are explored in more detail in the case study report in Chapter 7. At the same time it is important to note that the white and minority ethnic groups did *not* differ in their scores on other indices of *It Happened To Me At School*. We will examine positive features of social inclusion too in Chapter 7.

Chapter 4 The case study schools, the pupils and their families

Summary

In this chapter we describe the small sample of fourteen schools in four regions of the country which were the focus of much of our work during the project. These schools each had 4 – 6% minority ethnic pupils at the time of their last DfES return but otherwise varied in size, type of catchment area and performance. We concentrated on Years 3 – 6 in primary schools and Years 7 – 9 in secondary schools. The survey that was reported in the previous chapter involved both white and minority ethnic pupils in that age range.

The case studies that are introduced here focused on minority ethnic children exclusively. We interviewed 61 pupils in Years 3 - 9, one or both of their parents (in most cases) and a sample of 77 of their teachers. Apart from class teachers, form tutors and/or heads of year, we met with head or deputy head teachers and the teachers in each school responsible for Mathematics, Religious Education and Physical Education. The pupils came from a range of minority ethnic groups, including a significant proportion of children who had a mixed heritage background, reflecting the composition of the minority ethnic population of the schools.

The procedures we used for sampling, interviewing and data analysis are described. Schools with below average numbers of children eligible for free school meals were slightly over-represented in the sample. This should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings that are reported below.

4.1 Introduction

The starting point for the work on case studies was the view that survey methods alone could not illuminate the dynamics behind the broad patterns of achievement that were outlined in Chapter 2 and the group differences in perceptions of school experience that were outlined in Chapter 3. A fuller understanding of the causes of these phenomena could only be achieved through a more intensive study of the perspectives of individual stakeholders.

The main focus of the work on case studies was on individual schools. We aimed to learn how each school responded to the needs of minority ethnic pupils and enhanced (or inhibited) their educational achievements. This phase of the work involved interviewing a small sample of minority ethnic children in each school along with their parents and selected teachers. The intention was to highlight practice at classroom level as well as whole school level, and we were prepared for divergences of practice within schools as well as between schools. Through this material we hoped to explore such issues as the treatment of cultural diversity in the schools and the impact of school policies about bullying on children from minority ethnic backgrounds.

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At the same time we expected that the interviews with pupils and their parents would illuminate the central themes of the study through a focus on individual and family experiences. Examples of themes that might be illuminated in this way were questions about parents' motives for sending their children to schools with few children from the same background and questions about the impact of that experience on the development of the children's sense of ethnic identity.

4.2 Selecting the schools and the children

Schools

The criteria for selecting case study schools were that a school should admit both boys and girls, should be non-selective and should have had 4 - 6% minority ethnic pupils at the time of their last DfEE return. We planned to focus on Years 3 - 6 in primary schools and Years 7 - 9 in secondary schools. Therefore we did not include in the sample schools that were organised on a different basis such as first, middle and upper schools. We sought to include schools from four different regions of England and from a range of types of area. The sample was to be diverse in terms of the schools' record of academic success, the socioeconomic character of their catchment areas and the ethnic background of the small number of pupils from ethnic minority communities.

It must be acknowledged that a sizeable minority of head teachers either failed to reply to our letters or replied to explain that they were unwilling to involve their schools in the project. In their own words their reasons for declining to participate included:

- *We are already participating in a lot of other activities and cannot manage anything else.*
- *All our efforts at the moment are going into applications for an Arts Mark Award and Investors in People.*
- *We would love to have both the time and the administrative staff to participate in your work. Regrettably we do not have enough of either.*
- *I have become increasingly concerned with the bureaucratic burden placed on my staff by an ever-increasing number of such exercises... As you will know, my concerns are shared by the professional associations, in particular the National Association of Head Teachers and the Secondary Heads Association. In declining to take part in such exercises, I am following their national policy.*

There was no pattern of regional variation in whether or not schools agreed to participate. Schools that were more successful in terms of national performance criteria may have been slightly more likely to agree to do so. It is significant that some head teachers subsequently told their researcher that they or their staff group had decided to take part because they thought they could learn something useful from the exercise. Their comments included:

- *We will all learn from this.*
- *My deputy and I thought it would do us good.*
- *It is good timing for us as we are due to revisit our equal opportunities policy and our anti-bullying policy soon.*
- *Just glancing through the questionnaires (i.e. those reported in Chapter 3) I think it could be really useful information.*

We ourselves decided not to approach some schools because we discovered anomalies in the listing of schools with 4 - 6% minority ethnic pupils. In one case there were relatively few minority ethnic pupils but most of them (20/22) were from one minority group. It did not seem helpful to think of the children in this group as isolated at school from those sharing their background in the sense in which other children in our sample were. We came across only one example of this pattern. A more common problem was that some schools which were shown as having 4 - 6% minority ethnic pupils had in fact recorded the ethnic background of less than 90% of the children on roll. In some cases it was less than 65%. The failure to include such high proportions of the school population in the return made this data suspect. We are satisfied that we eventually obtained reliable data on the case study schools. In other work small variations in numbers probably have little effect on statistics concerning schools with substantial numbers of minority ethnic pupils. But in the case of a small to medium sized primary school with less than 8 -10 minority ethnic pupils the omission of over 15% of the school roll in an analysis could seriously distort the picture. We did not include in the case study sample any school for which the available data was based on less than 95% of the total roll.

Pupils and families

Target pupils were identified in each school so as to sample across year groups and across minority ethnic backgrounds (including children with a mixed or dual heritage). After discussion with the Steering Group it was agreed that we would not specifically target the children of refugees and asylum seekers, as it is anticipated that research focusing on that population will be commissioned separately at a later date. The sample was not intended to include white children whose parents had come from overseas (e.g. European Union countries or Eastern Europe). However, in one school teachers evaluated a child whose parents were Greek as a member of a minority ethnic group, and he was included in the sample for that school. It will be seen in Table 4.4 below that no Bangladeshi children were put forward by their schools for inclusion in the project.

When parents' permission was sought, they were given assurances about confidentiality and it was made clear that the researcher would ask to meet with them as well as interview their child at school. A small number of parents refused agreement on the grounds that they did not have time. Many were wary about participating in such research. One parent, a teacher, who did agree after talking it through with the researcher on the phone, appeared to speak for a number of others when he explained later that he had been suspicious that the project would be "*to a large extent hypocritical*". He thought he would be "*used to make points of some sort*". He thought that "*history has taught us that these things don't do anything, and the conclusions arrived at are obscure... They rarely lead to action*". The parent of the only "non-white" child in a small rural primary school had quite different reasons for refusing to agree to participate. The child had one white parent and, as described by the head teacher, "*looked white*". The parents did not want him to be made to stand out by being included in a project of this kind. Some parents who did participate in the research shared this concern that their child should not be highlighted as different from others as a result.

Overall the number of individual refusals was small, and there were no withdrawals. Because the refusals usually occurred during conversations that parents had with head teachers or other school staff and parents, it was not possible for the research team to evaluate the reasons in every case. There was no basis for believing that the sample was distorted because of such refusals. For example, there was no discernible pattern of refusal or withdrawal being more common in any particular minority ethnic group. In a very few cases parents placed restrictions on the interviewing process, which we respected. For example, the mother of a Year 4 boy would only allow him to be interviewed if she could be present.

4.3 The Case Study Schools

The fourteen case study schools were situated in four regions - London (2), South East (4), Eastern (4) and East Midlands (4). None were in inner city or heavy industrial areas. Table 4.1 lists key features of their neighbourhoods or catchment areas. The six secondary schools ranged in size from 650 to 1600 pupils and the eight junior and primary schools from 140 to 400. All but two of the schools had 4 - 6% minority ethnic pupils. In two primary schools small changes in overall numbers had taken the schools outside this range during six months before our visit: in one case the school now had 2.8% and in another 6.9%.

Table 4.1 Key features of the schools' neighbourhoods or catchment areas

School location	*No. of schools*
"Affluent" or "comfortable" village or suburb on the edge/outskirts of a small market town or commuter town	4 secondary and 1 primary
Village or small town with industrial facilities	2 secondary and 1 primary
Local authority estate and/or area of mainly subsidised housing in small town	3 primary
Area of mainly subsidised housing on the outskirts of a large metropolitan region	3 primary

Table 4.2 shows the number of schools with different proportions of children eligible for free school meals. In the four regions in which the schools were situated 14% of primary school pupils and 12.5% of secondary school pupils were eligible for free school meals. It is evident that schools with a relatively privileged intake were slightly over-represented in the sample. This was most marked in the secondary phase. It will be seen below that this is reflected in the socioeconomic profile of the minority ethnic families in the sample. The findings of the study about the schools should be interpreted with this profile in mind.

Table 4.2 Proportion of children eligible for free school meals	
% pupils eligible for free school meals	*No. of schools*
20 - 35	3
10 - 19	5
2 - 9	6

Table 4.3 presents summary data on the schools' recent results in public examinations and SATs. The national figure for pupils obtaining five or more A* - C grades in GCSE was 49%. The comparable figures for Key Stage 2 SATs were 75% in English, 72% in Mathematics and 85% in Science. The schools' performance profile is compatible with this. Another indicator of education standards in the schools was the account given in the latest available Ofsted Report on each establishment. In these reports the quality of education was described as good or very good in nine of the schools and as satisfactory or improving from a low base in five.

Table 4.3 The schools' recent results in GCSEs and SATs		
		No. of schools
GCSE results 1999/00 % obtaining 5 grades A* - C	11 - 30%	1
	31 - 50%	2
	51 - 70%	3
	71 - 90%	0
SATs results - English 1999/00 % obtaining Level 4 or above	61 - 70%	2
	71 - 80%	2
	81 - 90%	1
	91 - 100%	3
SATs results - Maths 1999/00 % obtaining Level 4 or above	61 - 70%	4
	71 - 80%	1
	81 - 90%	0
	91 - 100%	3
SATs results - Science 1999/00 % obtaining Level 4 or above	61 - 70%	0
	71 - 80%	2
	81 - 90%	2
	91 - 100%	4

4.4 Case study pupils and their families

We interviewed 61 pupils (28 in secondary schools and 33 in junior and primary schools). There were 8 - 12 children from each year group between Years 4 and 8 plus 6 from Year 3 and 7 from Year 9. Background information about the sample is summarised in Table 4.4. The column listing ethnic background should be read with some caution. As noted in Chapter 1, many researchers in this field have drawn attention to shortcomings in the systems that are available for categorising ethnic background in schools. When Daniels et al (1999) examined school files in the course of research on a different topic and when Bonnett and Carrington (2000) interviewed student teachers, it was clear that this confusion has an impact on those working directly with pupils. Many of our informants appeared confused too. Teachers, parents and pupils had difficulty in some cases in describing the ethnic background of the children using an accepted ethnic category label. In some cases the problems arose from ignorance or misinformation. In other cases a simplistic category such as those employed in the census could not capture the complexity of an individual or family history. This issue is explored further in Chapter 5.

Children listed under the "Any Other" heading in Table 4.4 came from families whose roots were in East Africa (Asian), Greece, Iraq, Japan (2) and Mauritius. Almost a quarter of the case study children were from mixed or dual heritage backgrounds. As noted above, the official statistics for the LEAs and schools had not prepared us for what appeared to be a relatively high proportion of dual heritage pupils among the small "minority ethnic" populations of these schools. A third of the mixed/dual heritage children had one White British parent. Some others had parents who shared a cultural heritage but came from different continents (e.g. a Kenyan Asian woman married to a man from her family's original region of India). The ambiguous situation of mixed and dual heritage children appears to be a significant feature of some schools with small ethnic minority populations. We discuss the issues raised by our informants in this connection in Chapter 13.

Table 4.4 Characteristics of the children

Gender	Boys	33		Year group	No.
	Girls	28		3	6
				4	8
Ethnic background	Black Caribbean	4		5	9
	Black African	7		6	10
	Indian	12		7	9
	Pakistani	10		8	12
	Bangladeshi	0		9	7
	Chinese	6			
	Any Other	7			
	Dual Heritage	15			

Approximately a third of the families (21) spoke English as the sole language of the home, just over half (33) spoke a combination of English and another language at home, and just over a tenth (7) used another language at home entirely or almost entirely without English. Apart from English the languages spoken most often were Urdu, Punjabi, Chinese (mainly Cantonese) and Hindi.

The largest religious groups were Muslim (25%) and Hindu (12%). Other faith traditions represented in the sample were, in order of frequency, Catholic, Evangelical Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Greek Orthodox and Jain. Two children had parents from different faith traditions. Just under a quarter of the families claimed no faith allegiance.

The employment profile of the parents was rather different from that found nationally among minority ethnic groups. The proportion of families with one or both parents self-employed (25%) was almost twice as high as might have been expected (Cabinet Office, 2001). A third of the households had at least one parent working in a professional or managerial occupation (including five children with one or both parents working as a nurse). Less than half had parents in manual occupations (skilled, semi-skilled or other) or unemployed.

4.5 The interviewing procedure

The aim in each case study school was to interview 4 - 8 individual minority ethnic pupils, their parents and the teachers most likely to have an overview of their situation (class teachers in primary schools and form tutors in secondary schools). In addition, we interviewed the head teacher, or their deputy, or both, and teachers with overall responsibility for Religious Education, Mathematics and Physical Education. Mathematics was selected as a representative core subject, and Religious Education and Physical Education as subjects that might raise particular issues in relation to minority ethnic pupils in schools where there were few minority ethnic children. In a small number of schools, where this was seen as relevant to understanding provision for children learning English as an additional language (EAL), we also interviewed some of the teachers and assistants who were directly involved in that work. (The discussions with the subject leaders are reflected at various points in the text, notably in Chapter 8 in the case of teachers responsible for mathematics, Chapter 9 in the case of religious education and Chapter 10 for EAL. The discussions with teachers responsible for physical education concerned a range of issues such as stereotyping of minority ethnic pupils, adherence to dress codes for girls and group interactions in informal situations. There are reported ar various points in the report so that there is no single place where we analyse the response to ethnic diversity in physical education in the schools.)

All six members of the team were involved in interviewing. A semi-structured format was followed in order to ensure consistency. Detailed interview guides outlined specified areas for questioning with follow-up probes for use as required. The key interview formats were piloted in schools that were not to be used in the main study. All interviews were taped and began with an explanation of the purpose of the research and an assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. Questioning of teachers, parents and older children was generally direct and addressed the research questions explicitly. The exception to this was that we elicited ideas about good practice from children and parents through the device of seeking their assistance with preparing a handbook for people facing the situation that they faced. The following extract from one of the interview guides illustrates how this was addressed with secondary pupils and older pupils in primary schools:

We are trying to help children and young people in different groups get on well at school. We are writing a handbook about it. Tell me what we should say in it. Here is an example: Imagine that a boy or a girl who is from [specify an ethnic group/mixed background very similar or identical to the respondent's own] has just moved into [name the town/area that is the catchment area of the school] with his/her family. Imagine s/he is going to start at this school next week. What would you tell him/her to help him/her make a good start here?

The interviewer was advised to try to explore both academic/curricular aspects and social aspects, and probes were provided to enable them to pursue these issues further if needed.

With the younger primary school pupils an indirect story completion technique was used, based on the model developed by Raven (1951). The child was invited to complete a story in response to narrative stems and questions presented by the interviewer. The hero of the story was a boy or girl with the same background as the child's own. One example of a stem for completion was:

One day, when s/he was in school, this boy/girl said: "That's not fair". [To be said with emphasis.] What did s/he think wasn't fair? Why was s/he angry/upset?
What happened next? Possible probes include - what the teacher did about it, how the incident ended.

This section of the interview ended with a series of probes to explore to what extent the things that had happened in the story echoed things that had happened during the child's own life in school.

The length of the interviews with children and teachers, which were all held at school, was varied slightly to fit in with the school timetable. None exceeded an hour, and some interviews with teachers were restricted to half an hour in order to accommodate to the school's needs. Parents were given the choice of holding their interview at the school or at home. The home visits were usually rather longer and, in a few instances, included other family members.

4.6 Analysis of the interview material

There were over 200 interviews during the case study phase of the project. In order to conduct a rigorous analysis of that volume of material within the required timescale we adopted a strategy of iterative sampling in which the records were reviewed repeatedly to identify what participants had to say on particular topics. The analysis focused initially on small subsets of the interviews for exploratory or "theory-seeking" analysis and then drew on researchers' knowledge of wider subsets for confirmatory validation or "theory-testing" (Bassey, 1999).

A first draft of a list of possible key themes for analysis was developed on the basis of the research brief and the original tender. This was subjected to detailed discussion at successive meetings of the Steering Group and of the research team until a final list of themes was agreed. This then formed the basis of the analysis and is reflected in the headings and subheadings of the chapters of this report. A detailed analysis of each key theme was then undertaken by a single researcher. These analyses concentrated on a subsample of 4 - 7 schools, employing different subsamples for each piece of analysis. A list of draft findings based on those schools was circulated to all the members of the research team with tables indicating the references for relevant quotations from the

interviews. Each researcher at that point examined the draft with one question in mind - is each of these statements true of the schools in which I worked? They gave feedback on that question and, if appropriate, suggested relevant quotations from their interviews. It was seen as particularly important that feedback was given if anyone considered that a statement might *not* apply as it stood to one or more of their schools or cases. The findings were revised until they were seen as reflecting researchers' observations across all the schools accurately. The most complex themes were then subjected to a cross-validation analysis in which a further small sample of schools was examined in detail in order to ensure that the list of draft "findings" applied fully to them.

The aim of the process was not to count the number of exemplars of a particular view around each theme. This was not possible since the full sample of interviews was not analysed for every theme. It was not desirable, in any case, because the case study approach cannot yield reliable information on the incidence of particular kinds of perception or experience. Our aim has been to indicate the broad prevalence of views/experiences within our small case study sample by the use of terms such as "one", "some" and "most". The value of the approach lies in the illumination of complex issues facing pupils, parents and teachers in the situation of those we interviewed. That is of greater value at this stage of research in this field than quantifying the probability of certain things happening. In the discussion of many of the themes of the research there was individual variation within the samples of children, parents and teachers which yielded insights that are reflected in the finding listed for each theme.

In a final stage of the iterative process we returned to eight of the schools to feed back to interested staff on the research process to which many of them had given up their time. During these meetings (which were taped) we elicited any observations that the teaching staff wished to make on the draft findings. The aim was to enable us to identify any areas where our draft findings were out of line with the perceptions of members of staff across the schools. The points they made were taken into account in the drafting of the final version of this report.

Chapter 5 Who am I and why am I here at this school?

In the first part of this chapter we examine our informants' views on the children's development of a sense of identity, specifically a sense of their ethnic identity. The second part of the chapter focuses on the reasons that the parents had for choosing a mainly white school for their child.

Part 1 Who am I?

Summary

The research questions addressed in this section are:

- What image do minority ethnic children who attend mainly white schools have of themselves in relation to their families and in relation to others?
- How do minority ethnic parents and children see the relationship between their home culture and the children's school culture?

The principal findings reported here are:

- Aspects of ethnicity were central in the pupils' self-identification. The most important features of their ethnic self-characterisation appeared to stem from their families. A sense of ethnic identity was promoted by parents through teaching their children their home language or religious and cultural values and through involving them in contacts with and visits to networks of relatives and friends from the same ethnic background. An additional factor influencing how they saw their ethnic identity was the way in which they and other members of their ethnic group were perceived and treated outside the home.
- There was considerable variation in how far the children and their parents would have liked to see their ethnic identity expressed more fully and openly at school. Schools face a challenging task in attempting to respect this range of views.

5.1 Introduction

In society outside school ethnic differences receive a good deal of attention. Schools as institutions and individual teachers as mediators of the school culture may choose to accept or deny, emphasise or play down such differences. The choices made regarding this will play a crucial role in the development by minority ethnic pupils of a sense of their own identity. Home and school may promote distinct identities, which can be experienced by pupils as being in harmony or dissonance depending on how these differences are perceived and treated.

The concept of ethnic identity is very complex and involves highly sensitive issues. This investigation started by selecting children for attention by attributing an identity to them based on their ethnic origins. For some teachers and parents – and for a small number of the children themselves - this in itself aroused anxiety. One primary teacher spoke for many when she said:

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The fact that you are asking me questions about it worries me because I find it quite difficult to think of a child as being different because they happen to have a different skin colour or their mother or father came from a different country to Britain and things like this worry me because I am having to think of children as different and I don't want to.

However, identities become alive through their distinctiveness. It is partly through recognising and being aware of differences that individuals and those around them construct of a sense of who they are.

This section of the report will analyse the influence of ethnic identification on the pupils' definition of "*who I am*" and on how they were viewed by their parents and teachers. The data from interviews were explored to answer the questions:

- How far do the pupils draw their identity from their ethnic background? Do they see themselves as ethnically different from other groups in their schools? If they do, what specific ethnic dimensions do they emphasise?
- How far do families' practices emphasise and promote to the children an involvement in and a sense of belonging to a home culture? How do parents see the relationship between their home culture and their children's school culture?

In later chapters we will examine to what extent teachers' practices and school activities recognised and promoted pupils' distinct ethnic identities. In this chapter the main focus is on the perspectives of the children and parents.

5.2 Observations made by children and parents

The children

Whether they felt comfortable about it or not, children's sense of who they were was bound up with an understanding of their ethnic background and an appreciation of how it might impact on others. Malcolm, a Year 5 boy who was born in this country to parents who had come from Hong Kong, saw himself as having a split image among boys in his class:

Ma[4]: Friends would say I'm really good, and others would say I'm weird.
I: Why would they say "weird"?
Ma: Because I'm from another country.

When Sadiq, a Year 8 boy from a Pakistani background, was invited by the researcher to provide some advice for a handbook to help a boy like himself moving into the area, he said:

Don't be embarrassed/scared because you're different - family, religion, etc.

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[4] The convention adopted when quoting from interviews was to represent each speaker with the following:

Pupil -	First letter(s) of the child's name (e.g. S might refer to Sadiq. 'Ma' here refers to Malcolm)
Mother -	'M' or 'Mo'
Father -	'F' or 'Fa'
Interviewer -	'I'

Rafiq is a Year 8 boy with a mixed Muslim background. His mother had come to this country from Malaysia and his father from Pakistan. He himself was born here. Asked how he would describe his background, he said:

> *Well, I' d just say I'm a practising Muslim, I pray when I can, I' m quite religious. I just go to school as normal, I' m just a normal person. School' s fine. I get along with everybody quite nicely, and everybody's nice to me. So I just lead a normal life, and it's just that I have a different coloured skin to some people, and they have a different coloured skin to me. There' s no problem with that, and I don' t have a problem with it .*

Samuel, a Year 8 pupil, felt it was good being half White British and half Black American:

> *I like it because there's too many white people and not enough black people and I'm both and I like to be half of both.*

The complex identity issues facing children with dual heritage will be discussed in detail in Chapter 11.

All the children were interviewed at school. In general, they gave the impression that they enjoyed their private interviews and were quite comfortable talking about issues relating to ethnicity in a mainly white environment. But there were exceptions. Ben, a Year 8 boy from a Chinese background, kept his answers short, screwed up his face when asked about his Chinese name, and said firmly that he had never visited his parents' country of origin and "*actually I don't want to either*". He was able to explain his family history but had difficulty defining his own background, as he did not want to commit himself to being Chinese or English and appeared to see them as mutually exclusive choices. The interviewer suggested that he seemed to be saying that his Chinese background really did not make a lot of difference to him.

> *B: Yeah.*
>
> *I: Can you tell me a bit more about that? ' Cause some people would say that they're very, very proud of being Chinese and different and going to a school like your school in C (i.e. the Chinese school he goes to on Saturdays).*
>
> *B: I just feel the same, really...*
>
> *I: You just feel the same?*
>
> *B: Yeah, you know, the same as other people.*

Clearly the children's sense of group identity was greatly influenced by how they interpreted the perceptions and actions of people outside the home. But they did not refer to peer group influences as fostering a sense of ethnic solidarity in the way that can happen in a school in an ethnically diverse area (Ryan, 1999). In contrast, the ethnic self-characterisation of most of the children laid the greatest emphasis on the influence of their families. Specific features of the parents' life styles and child rearing were emphasised by both parents and children in this context - the languages they spoke at home and outside, their religious practices and the traditions they followed in relation to personal names, food and dress. Also crucial for the children were their perceptions of very different aspects of their heritage such as racial characteristics, their parents' pride or otherwise in their ethnic background, and links with their countries of origin and with different generations of the family.

Isolation and engagement

It might be thought that the families of minority ethnic children attending mainly white schools would all be living in isolation from their ethnic group. That was not the case. Some families who lived in a mainly white area maintained regular contact with a network of family, friends or co-religionists from their own ethnic background in other areas. Other families were living in an area that had a substantial proportion of families from the same ethnic background but chose to send their child to school in a mainly white area. (Their reasons will be examined in the next section.) We will illustrate the range of family situations and their complex implications for the children's evolving sense of identity with four case studies.

The first pair are traditional nuclear families while the third and fourth are single parent households. The majority of the families in the sample had both parents present. It may be that the single parent households faced a greater risk of potential isolation. The first two families lived or had lived some distance away from their own ethnic/cultural community but had developed strategies for reducing their isolation from it. While they aimed to sustain links and competence in their home culture, they were also committed to helping their child to adjust to the English culture. They appeared to have a representation of adjustment to life in England which did not need to exclude (or deny) their roots. In the third family, who live within an ethnic minority enclave in the nearest town to the school where we were working, the mother had experienced a sense of isolation from what most people would think of as "her" community and wished to move away. In the fourth a divorced mother had a close-knit, multiethnic network of friends and was not concerned about the lack of ethnic peers for herself (though with some questions in her mind in relation to her children).

Family W (Dechen)

Mr and Mrs W, who came to the UK from Sri Lanka, had lived and worked in this area for many years. There were now about ten families in the district who were from Sri Lanka. Two families were fairly close friends. They got together once a year for dinner with the rest when Sri Lankan events were celebrated. They got together for cricket also. There was one family that they were very close to who had two children close in age to Dechen who is in Year 4.

Mr W used to drive D to London every weekend for him to have lessons for two hours in Sinhalese. But there is now a Sri Lankan Temple locally and so he goes there for both language lessons and religious education. At the same time Dechen's father stressed that he was aware of what it is like being a minority ethnic person in a white society and that it was his choice to live in such community.

> *If you are thinking... always conscious of being a coloured person in this white society and then everything they say is because of my colour. And there are only ten Sri Lankan families in this town. The rest are all Asians and Pakistanis or Bangladeshis. And they can call me a Paki*
>
> *[laughing] but I have to say I'm not a Paki. I'm from Sri Lanka. You know what I mean. So if you look at it that way, I don't have a problem...I came here to work. It was my choice. So I don't come here and say they are all against me. Dechen can turn around and say, "Why did you bring me to England? Why didn't you bring me up in Sri Lanka?" Whereas I chose to come.*

Helping Dechen to develop the knowledge and skills to become part of their home culture and at the same time become part of the British society seems to be the main goal his parents are trying to achieve. As his father said:

> *I think my worry is also bringing him up in England. I don't want him to get completely involved in the Sri Lankan ways and then suddenly lose track. I want him to learn. You know, be what England has to offer and be British or whatever you want to call it, but have your other things also, knowing where you come from....*

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Family A (Maha)

Mrs A came from Pakistan, but Maha was born in Scotland (L) where her father still lives. Her parents separated when Maha was about nine years old. Mrs A chose this area when she left her husband

> *because I'd already been here - not for living purposes, but I'd been visiting my friends, very, very close family friends. Um, so I knew the area, I knew the people. Not all of them, but I knew that I've got somebody here, so I know it's a big difference between living here and up there.*

W is much smaller than L, though it does have a substantial Asian community. Initially the family stayed in B, the almost entirely white area where the school is situated. They moved to W for financial reasons, but the children still attend schools in the B area. She did not want to move them because they had already had enough disruption, but also because she valued the standards of education in the secondary school in B that Maha was now attending.

When she lived in B, after first coming down from L, she felt quite free, even as a single mother.

> *Wherever I went, whatever I do, whatever I eat - not eat -, but, I mean, most of the things, I actually did in a free manner... So when I moved to W., you have got Indian here, Indian here, Indian here. And, um, I couldn't just do anything freely, as I used to do.*

She had not really wanted to move to W but they could not find a suitable property in this area because of the prices. So they had to move there. She is now hoping to move back possibly into a council property. Meanwhile she has taken a part-time job in the evenings about half an hour's drive from home. She is committed to her work and to living in an English environment, but has not found it easy to adapt to this culture.

> *And I want to keep on, right. I'm not fully, um, adapted to English, I'm not fully adapted to it, and I want to keep on... I mean, I want to enjoy both. But then, living in an area where I am, it's not so easy... Well, like, for instance, I actually work for JM and we have to help, well we, we are given uniforms, right?... And the, then, um, I have to wear something, even in hot weather, I have to wear something on top of my uniform from here to there, from head to toe... to cover it. Uh, and I get into the car. When I get there, it's easier just to take my coat off and jump into the ... bus to take us to the sales office... And my situation, my personal situation, I, I also get criticised for that (i.e. for being on her own as a mother)... Although in a religion, I tell you some people, actually, they misunderstand... Yes, there is, in the religious code, there is provision for married people to separate... But, um, our people are actually against it. So when I first moved from B, nobody would talk to me. And now, now it's been two years. I've made some friends.*

Family S (Savarna)

Savarna is in Year 4. Her parents had close connections with their family in B (a large, multiethnic city about 50 miles away). She explained that they went to B every Sunday to visit the Hindu temple. She saw her cousins then, *"because all of my cousins live in B"*. Her father had rejected the temple of a large town much nearer their home partly because he did not like its style (*"it's not really a temple, the way I looked at things"*) and partly, it must be assumed, because of the benefits of maintaining regular contact with the family at B. Savarna happily tells her teacher about the visits and quite often comes in with her hands decorated and tells the class about that. It appeared to her class teacher that they were quite isolated in the housing estate near the school where they lived in terms of their ethnicity and religion. He felt that her feeling of being well integrated *"comes from having this big group in B that she goes to. Perhaps if she was here all the time and didn't have... It's the backup of having a family and knowing you're part of a big group, that you're not isolated at all, that gives her that confidence."*

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Family H (Michael)

Michael's mother lived in the UK in the same area some years earlier when training as a nurse. Her two sons were born here. Michael was a few months old when the family moved back to the Caribbean. The parents had since divorced, and his mother had come back for some work experience and further training in community nursing. She expected to stay here until her older son has finished secondary school but planned eventually to go back to her home island in the West Indies.

She had chosen the area because she knew it. She had friends still living there who had trained with her. In fact, the boys had some knowledge of it, as this was the area that they had visited with their parents and then their mother in the years in between. She was not aware of a significant community in London from her island and had, in fact, met only two people from there since returning. Her own network of local friends stemming from the time when she trained here in the same area were not from the Caribbean. They were diverse - one Ugandan, one from India, one English. But they were very close having gone through a lot together while training. They had been there with her when she was pregnant with the boys. Her Ugandan girlfriend had two children whose ages were close to the boys'. None of the others in the group had children. But they had got to know one or two boys in the block of flats or locally, all of them white.

When at the end of the interview she was invited to comment on anything else she would like to raise that she saw as relevant, she went back to her decision to live in this area. "I got the feeling that you wanted to ask me - why I didn't live in an area that was more.. (pauses) black." She hadn't thought of doing so, because she had had particular reasons for coming here. But if she had had a choice and didn't know anyone here, she thought that she probably wouldn't have moved to a black area like D or C anyway. Her key concern would have been accessibility. She likes open spaces, being able to go to the park. In D "*it's noisy, it's very built up*". She would reject even some other local outer London suburbs because they are built up too. She wants to be able to expand, to spread, to be able to go out and walk. We discussed the local park here, which is very extensive. The boys play in it. It is accessible. Having got divorced, she wants the boys to be able to feel independent, to go out, not to need her all the time. Round here she can let them go out on their own. She would have worries about safety in some places. But here her flat is next door to one of her network of friends. This was actually a coincidence. The flat just became available at the right time when she was looking. It has been a great bonus. She was ill shortly after moving in, and her friends looked after the boys while she was in hospital for a week. She felt she had been very lucky. The interviewer commented that she seemed to have reproduced the networks and the openness of her small island in London. She thought that would be nice if it were possible. The association of ideas for her was of automatically saying hello to people on a bus at home. She then gave a lively account of the comedy of English people's reaction to a person talking to them on a bus here in London. She explained how she tried hard to communicate with her neighbours in the block of flats, making sure she got to know them a little.

The parents

How would these different patterns of ethnic identification and social engagement affect parents' aspirations for their children's education? As might be expected, there was considerable variation in the views that parents and children expressed when they discussed the relationship between their ethnic group membership and White British/school culture. We identified three broad approaches:

(i) Those who valued their ethnic identity and would have liked to see it expressed more fully and openly at school;

(ii) Those who valued their ethnic identity, but preferred to keep it private and separated from their identity at school;

(iii) Those who considered that their future was in the UK and that there was no reason to follow their home culture.

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Table 5.1 illustrates views on various activities through which ethnic identification is expressed. Under each heading the interview extract in the left hand column is from parents who value and assert their distinctive ethnic identity, and the extract on the right is from parents who (willingly or reluctantly) accept that it will play a less salient role in their children's lives.

Table 5.1 Contrasting views on various activities through which ethnic identification is expressed	
Use of home language	
Mohini, a Year 3 girl who came to this country at the age of four, speaks three languages. Her mother explained: *I: Before Mohini came to school, was she speaking any English?* *Mo: Yes.* *I: So, you've taught her English as well as Bengali?* *Mo: And Hindi as well. Because from Calcutta, we moved to Delhi...stayed about three years in Delhi. So, in those schools, they have to learn Hindi because they have to speak Hindi there. So, I had to speak bits to teach her Hindi. And when she was confident in Hindi, we moved to England and now she has to speak English.* *I: Does she keep the Hindi up?* *Mo: Yes [mainly through watching television], because she has to keep in touch with the national language because when she goes back, she will need it again. So, even if Bengali is the language in Calcutta, you have to learn how to speak and write Hindi all over India...* *I: And she doesn't have any lessons in Bengali? It is spoken at home.* *Mo: It's spoken at home... because if I don't speak it...if I keep doing the English at home, she'll just...she's doing English at school. Like, I've seen some families...the children don't understand the language at all...So, you know, when they go back to India, it is really difficult for them to communicate.*	Karamdeep is a Year 8 girl who was born in this country. During her parents' interview they were asked whether they spoke English at home all the time. *Mo: We speak English. We shouldn't.* *I: (Laughs) Why do you say that?* *Mo: Well, because we're aware that we're not passing the language on. S and A (the older two) have got a better grasp of the language than younger children. But, um, in a way it's our fault because we don't speak the language, but our problem being that... Well, F (her husband) speaks Punjabi because that was his first language first. English is always, I've always thought, I think in English. So I have to sort of translate in my own head to speak it. So it's just become easier to speak the language (we) speak. Because people say to me, you know, is this your second language? And I say actually, no, it's my first language (laughs) and, which makes it difficult... we've had days and, so like Sundays we're going to speak Punjabi and that's all we're speaking. And it, after about an hour, and that's the maximum. (Laughs) We just drop back into English without even realising that we're doing it. It's not F's (her husband's) fault, 'cos he's outnumbered.* Even her mother, who speaks Punjabi, understands English. If the children speak to her in English, she responds in a mix of Punjabi and English. *Mo: She speaks, mixed (laughs)... Yes. But um she can make herself understood, and um, and in a way this is where it all starts falling down, because when the grandparents start accommodating the children, the children aren't learning it from anywhere... whereas when they can't speak English at all the children have got to try and find some way to actually communicate.*

Participation in community or religious classes	
Jabal is in Year 8. His mother, who came here from Pakistan, said: *He goes to a Mosque to learn the Koran. I pick him up after school every day... He's getting on fine. I mean, it took him a long time. He's a slow learner, but I think he's fine... But that is a big responsibility for us because, education is important to us as is religion. Religion is important to us. We have a responsibility to teach them. We've got to. He must learn all of this and if we don't, we have to answer for it later on in life. I know it means that he has a busy life, but then, it is only for a few years and then after that, they've got a whole life to enjoy. I feel that it is my responsibility for him to learn the values.*	Maha is in Year 7 Her mother, who came here from Pakistan, said: *...kids in our culture, they actually, they tend to go to Mosque, or religious study, uh, from Monday to Friday, after school, which is a big thing. Children, I think, I mean, they, they spend 8.00 till 3.00 clock here (i.e. at school). They go home, they get something to eat and then they straightaway make their way to the Mosque, to the nearest Mosque [which, in their case, would be in a town about ten miles away]. There is some number of Asians in a community there. But then again, time-consuming, you know, and, as I said, eight till three, they are here, then... you pick them up from here, take them to, back home, they have something to eat and then they don't sit and watch television, they go upstairs and do their, I mean, homework. And that takes them a while I think. And, uh, until six o' clock, sometimes. And then they watch a little bit, uh, programme, or whatever and so... Yeah, I don't know.. how other families have set, um, they have set this routine for their children... For me, it's the same time...*
Visits to country of origin	
Dechen is in Year 4. His parents said: *F: We feel that it is very important for him to know his background and where he is from...* *Mo: And we go home every year. That's another thing that I've always tried to do every year. If we can afford it, then we go back twice a year, but it is always once a year. Take him there. So he can see his cousins and he gets to know what his other side is, [laughs] how the other half lives.*	Ruth and Jason's parents have not themselves been back to Brunei since 1976. None of the children have ever been. She says: *Er, I don't think they are particularly interested. Their life lies here. That's what they know. That's their home... I mean, my parents are here. My husband's here. All the brothers and sisters are here. So, the community is here.*
Traditional values, gender, freedom and double lives	
Sabirah is in Year 8. Her father, who came here from Iraq, was concerned about the lack of resources in the area for girls on their own: *I'm not very restrictive. She sees all her friends going out to the cinema, disco, and asks why she's not allowed... Not a disco, maybe a coffee shop, or a cinema with just girls, films which is good (i.e. suitable) for them.*	Yaksha is a Year 9 pupil with an Indian background. Her parents said: *Mo: They need to be streetwise, especially this day and age, and if they're not allowed out, and if it's only home and school and shopping and [(ironing) it's not..* *F: When they're very strict like that, their kids will rebel, which is what we used to do when we were younger and, you know, because we had a strict upbringing, because then you start leading double lives... So you, you know, you live like your parents want you to when you're at home.* *Mo: And then* *F: But soon as you were out of the door you were* *Mo: Somebody else* *F: Completely different* *Mo: and it's hard on the children if they've got to live like that.*

	F: You know, it's different, and you've got to change with the times, you know, you can't come to this country and bring the old tradition with you and expect your kids to carry it on, and this is what a lot of the Asian families want their kids to do. I mean even back in the home country whether it's India, Pakistan or whatever, they're taking on more and more Western ideas and, you know, the kids as well, like, you know, they can have love marriages and, and so on, they're accepting it more over there, but here, the people that have moved away from their home country years ago, they still want to stick to the old tradition and, and the kids are going to go against it.

The influence of others' responses on the children's sense of who they were

Whatever the feelings parents had on the subject, and even if they might have been inclined to ignore and play down ethnic difference, the experience of prejudice and discrimination could still have a significant influence on how their children saw their identity. The focus might be almost anything that marks a person out as different. It could, for example, be their command of languages. The issues were sometimes distanced by our informants as they described the experiences of someone they knew rather than themselves. For example, Nabeel explained why he was embarrassed when a new boy joined his Year 9 form:

> *N: Er, he came to school and started um talking like... my language. (But I actually only speak) a couple of words, and I can put them into sentences and that, but I can't speak it. And people thought... it was a bit funny (to be speaking like that so)...*
>
> *I: So were they laughing at him?*
>
> *N: Yes... he thought they were laughing with him... but they were actually laughing at him.*
>
> *I: Gosh, how did that make you feel?*
>
> *N: Um, (well if they spoke to me)... If anyone else (spoke) to me I would have knocked them (out).*

Avtar, who was also in Year 9, reported his friend Chris' experience in relation to name calling:

> *A: No, 'cause, like, I've got a friend called Chris. He's half- caste. His mum's white, no, his mum was black and his dad's white. But, like, his mum's passed away now. So, but... But he's, he don't look Asian, he looks like he's black, really. He don't look like a half-caste. And if people say something to him, he's a 'Paki'. Not black or middle or something like that.*
>
> *I: Yeah. It sounds as though they're a bit ignorant about it.*
>
> *A: Yeah.*

Among the children who had had trouble with name calling was Ruth, whose mother was quoted above. She tended to play down the family's distinctive ethnic background:

> *Alright, the fact that we are Chinese and there's not very many Chinese families in M. In that sense, yes we are an isolated community, but we are part of the community and people don't perceive us as outsiders.*

But her daughter reported:

R: When I kept getting called names. I usually ended up crying. And when my friends came to help, one was going to get a teacher and I didn't like that because I was a bit anxious.

I: You didn't like the fact that the teachers were told?

R: No.

I: Can you remember what you were afraid of?

R: Well, it's really that some boys kept picking on me and teasing me about being Chinese and I get into a bit of a fight.

Ethnic identification and the schools

Parents' different views on ethnic identification and social engagement inevitably had an impact on what they sought from their children's schools. Parents and teachers alike expressed considerable unease about perceived mismatches between these aspirations and what actually happened. Table 5.2 illustrates the three perspectives that we identified in parents' approaches to questions about the relationship between their ethnic group membership and White British/school culture. The concerns expressed by teachers will be covered in later chapters.

Table 5.2
Parents' views on the relationship between ethnic group membership and White British/school culture

Valuing their children's ethnic identity and wishing to see it expressed more fully and openly at school
Sandeep had started a few months earlier in Year 6 of a suburban primary school. When her mother was asked about the religious life of the school, she said: *Mo: It is more on the English side, more Christian, and it's a shame they don't. At D they did mention it was Dhivali, and here they didn't mention it at all. D (her younger brother) has come back talking a lot about Jesus and God.* *I: That's difficult for you.* *Mo: No that's fine. They've been brought up that every religion's the same. It doesn't matter how you pray to them, everybody prays differently, it doesn't matter how. But a little bit more would be nice, just to get the teachers and children aware there is a special day for other religions. They did do quite a bit for Chinese New Year, but not for Dhivali. So Sandeep has to keep her feelings to herself on a special day... It doesn't bother me too much, but it would be nice, or even just a Hello in all the languages. It doesn't have to be something big to make everybody feel together.*
Valuing their children's ethnic identity but happy to develop and maintain a separate school identity
In the W Family who were described above the parents gave an example of what this perspective meant for them. Dechen, who is in Year 4, refers to them as Mum and Dad at school and when talking to English people, but when talking to people from Sri Lanka, he uses the Sri Lankan words instead. He understands why he does this. He has done it from the very beginning. *F: To me, I am very much a Sri Lankan at heart. What ever I do here, I do it. But, inside me there is a lot of Sri Lanka. So I try to give a lot of this to him. How I was then. Where I was brought up and how I was brought up. That's why I still respect my Grandmother and Mother and things like that... The school is quite happy with the way he is and the teachers. The thing is he doesn't like to be told off by his teachers or strangers. He always likes to do things right. If anybody thinks bad of him he doesn't like it ..* *M: I think he is accepting that this is the way we do things in our culture and this is the way we do things in the English culture. To balance both cultures together is the important thing which I think he's taking to.*

Believing the children's future is in the UK and seeing little benefit in maintaining a separate home culture
Chay-Lyn's mother: *To me I've got three children here. I think most people just accept them as they are. I don't think my children feel any different from other children. I know they know they're Chinese, but they're just part of the school, not any difference from other children. They're not left out, or feel any difference... I just mean I don't want to be left out. I just want to be normal like other people.* Jason and Ruth's mother: *I'm pretty sure they don't feel different. I've tried very hard to make them not feel different. I've said, "with the different colour skin, it's not an issue."*

5.3 Overview of findings

1. Aspects of ethnicity were central in the pupils' self-identification. Throughout the age range in Years 3 – 9 they explained clearly ways in which they were different from their peers. Their accounts emphasised both a cognitive dimension (what they thought was distinctive) and an affective dimension (how they felt about it). Some of the feelings were negative, and the experience of prejudice continues to have a significant influence on minority ethnic pupils' construction of identities. For the children we interviewed the most important features of their ethnic self-characterisation stemmed from their families – the use of a home language, different religious practices and particular aspects of life style such as diet and dress code as well as distinctive physical characteristics and overseas links. But another key factor in how they saw their ethnic identity was the way in which they and other members of their ethnic group were perceived and treated outside the home.

2. A sense of belonging and bonds with the family's ethnic groups were promoted by parents through teaching the children their home language, religion and cultural values and through involving them in contacts with and visits to networks of relatives and friends from the same ethnic background. These networks might be in their countries of origin, elsewhere in this country or, when available, in the area where they lived. While the children might be seen as "isolated" as members of an ME ethnic community in a mainly white school, they were often, through their family, in touch with significant networks of people who shared their ethnic background in the wider society.

3. Both children and parents varied in their approaches towards their ethnic group membership and its relationship to White British/school culture. Three approaches were identified:
   (i) Those who valued their ethnic identity and would have liked to see it expressed more fully and openly at school;
   (ii) Those who valued their ethnic identity, but were happy to develop and maintain a separate identity at school;
   (iii) Those who considered that their future was in the UK and saw little benefit in maintaining their home culture.

   Our informants were heterogeneous in their attitudes on this central issue, and schools face a challenging task in attempting to respect this range of views.

Chapter 5 Part 2 Why am I here at this school?

Summary

The research questions addressed in this section are:

- Do minority ethnic parents have particular reasons for sending their children to mainly white schools rather than multiethnic schools?

The principal findings reported here are:

- At primary school level, apart from those who chose a church school, most parents appear to have simply chosen the nearest school with places, though some were more selective, however, favouring schools with a record of educational success and rejecting schools where they did not like the ethos or thought the children's behaviour outside school unsatisfactory.
- The most common factors in parental choice of secondary school were a preference for schools with a strong record of academic success and the rejection of schools with a reputation for poor discipline or badly behaved pupils. Some of them had also been influenced by recommendations from family and friends or by a concern about exposing their children to the risk of a racist or hostile reception. Some minority ethnic parents had deliberately avoided local schools with a high proportion of minority ethnic pupils.

5.4 Introduction

With such a range of views on ethnic identity the parents we interviewed also varied in their reasons for choosing a mainly white school for their child. They followed the procedures set by their local education authorities, and many checked the official performance tables. However, when they also drew on informal sources of information about schools, there were issues relating to the position of minority ethnic pupils that had particular salience for many of them.

The observations we report below from parents and children need to be understood in the context of the choices open to them. At secondary transfer in some areas the options were restricted because of the existence of selection for grammar schools or the lack of single sex schools. Because we visited only mixed secondary schools and excluded single sex schools from the sample, we were not in a position to investigate the reasoning of those minority ethnic parents who choose single sex schools for their children.

5.5 Observations made by children, parents and teachers

Choosing a primary school

At primary school level, apart from those who chose a church school, most parents appear to have simply chosen the nearest school with places. Because a number of families had moved into an area when their children were already of school age, their choices were

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sometimes limited. For some the school where we met them was the second choice substitute for a school that had no places. Parents who had made a deliberate selective choice were usually concerned to identify a school with a record of educational success. Some had made their choice on the recommendation of a member of their extended family or a friend. For recent immigrants and refugees finding a reliable friend or person they could trust who knew about such things was a crucial step in the process. Parents' choices were sometimes based partly on the rejection of schools where they did not like the ethos or thought the children's behaviour outside school unsatisfactory. Examples included the rejection of a primary school drawing from a "rough" council estate where the parents had noticed children lounging and smoking outside during school hours in favour of a small, entirely white school which offered a rounded education that they felt comfortable with. Illustrative examples of comments from the parents and children are given in Table 5.3. As would be expected, many of the same themes emerged when secondary school choice was discussed. That is the subject of the next section.

Table 5.3 Reasons given for choosing a primary school

Maha (now Year 7) had moved into the area after her parents separated. Her mother chose the primary school because *"we lived more nearer to that one. It was walking distance. So then my mum thought that would be all right"*.

Mandy (now Year 4) had arrived in England from East Africa two years earlier. Her brother was already then attending a Catholic secondary school. Her mother found that the local Catholic primary school had no places. So Mandy went to a school round the corner from her home. Her mother felt that the school offered a relaxed and welcoming environment, and her own work routine now relied on the play centre that the school ran at the end of the day. *"I think she wouldn't have been happier than where she is now."*

Michael (Year 5) had arrived in the area from the Caribbean the previous August when his mother came to a local hospital for further training. Her first choice of school for him was a nearby primary school with a good league table position that fed a linked secondary school with a high reputation locally. There were no places at the school she had chosen for the beginning of the school year. So she had to go through an appeal procedure, put his name on a waiting list and write to all the schools that were close by. Eventually an alternative school admitted him *"because they had places. And I was really very keen to get him settled into school, and that was the reason why he ended up there."*

A refugee from East Africa who had brought her children to the UK recently did not know what to do about getting them into a school. So she asked a friend of hers, an older white female friend, who was *"like my mother here"*. On her advice the mother went to the local council offices where she was just given a list of schools with their phone numbers. She rang a lot of schools. Lime Park Primary was the first one with a place. She thought that schools with a bad reputation must be easy to get your child into because few parents want to send their children there. At secondary level her older son was getting into trouble at a school that regularly featured in the local newspaper because of problems there. But the primary school had made her and her younger son welcome and had proved successful in helping him to settle down in spite of initial difficulties. *"They treated him very, very well... I have nothing to complain about Lime Park. Really they treated him very well."*

Choosing a secondary school

Many of the same themes emerged in parents' discussions of the choice of secondary school, but for most of them the issues were more sensitive at secondary school transfer. The reasoning they gave most commonly for their decision was that a school had a strong

record of academic success. At the same time they often rejected schools with a reputation for poor discipline or badly behaved pupils. Many of the concerns that were expressed echoed those that might have emerged in a survey of white parents in the schools (Collins and Snell, 2000; Bagley et al, 2001).

Table 5.4 Secondary school choices based on reasoning that many white parents would share

The Pakistani mother of a Year 7 girl living in an ethnically mixed area of an adjacent town some distance from the suburban secondary school where we met her said: *"Um, keeping kids in this kind of school, the first, main reason is that the school has got very, um, high standard of education... Although, I mean, children in, um, the, um, uh, the ethnic background are very, very few, but that doesn't bother me.... I look at the stuff that the school has...education, um, high standards. They really encourage people, children to, to achieve their goals... which is, which is, that's what I was looking at. I didn't look at other things, I didn't give it, uh, whatever it takes me, my petrol, my time, my energy from coming from B..."*

The girl herself gave a slightly different emphasis in her account of the process when the interviewer pointed out that she lived some distance from the school and asked why she had come there. She said: *"...our first choice was L, but that was kind of a rough school. L was what we wanted. So we looked round there. But then we thought it was a bit rough, so we came to this school that had, that my mum had chosen. So..."*

The mother of a Year 9 boy in a mixed secondary school said: *"We went to Oaklands (Secondary) on recommendation, reputation. League tables, it's done very well, it certainly has. And I worked with quite a few people who had been past pupils of Oaklands, and mm, yes, they're well turned out people. A good basis was given at Oaklands."*

The Pakistani father of a boy who was now in Year 9 recalled with some pride the careful investigations he had undertaken before applying for a place for his son at the academically successful mixed secondary school where he met the interviewer: *"Um, I actually made a point of looking at their academic achievement results through the booklets... that I received. And I actually looked in, and I also, um, asked a few- I think there was one or two parents that have children here, and I asked them... what it's like, and they said it was very difficult to get in because they don't live within the area... You don't live in the catchment area, you can't get in... And, so that was one, one of the things. And, uh, that, I took itself, as a challenge, that we must get in!"*

Yaksha, who was now in Year 9, had followed her older brother into secondary school. Their Indian parents explained why they had rejected a school that was nearer their home:
Mo: ...from day one, where we lived, (I had noticed), over the years, M School, there's no way I would put my children in there.
F: No, I don't think the teachers really had much control over the kids there as well. The kids used to wander around all day, past our house, we weren't too far from the school... You could see the kids walking around during the day.
Mo: ...behaviour and their attitude.
F: The way they behaved in gangs and things like, we thought we don't want our kids (there).

These were concerns that would have been widely shared by white families with children at the schools. At the same time many of the minority ethnic parents had additional issues on their minds. They wished to protect their children from racism as far as possible. Thus individual parents had appealed against the allocation of a place in a school which they knew had had racist incidents and had withdrawn their child from a school where a racist incident had not been dealt with to their satisfaction.

Table 5.5
Reasoning about secondary school choices that related to the informants' minority ethnic status
1. Seeking protection from racist bullying and name calling

Abeerah, a Year 8 Pakistani girl, had had to go through the appeal process at secondary school transfer. Her mother stated that, because of this, she had missed the first six months of year 7. *We appealed because she was offered S and A, but there's racism at S, and A has a bad attitude towards ethnic minorities. Abeerah's cousin was kept away from school for two months because of racism. The school told her parents that the boys concerned would leave after their exams, so they kept her away until they'd gone.*

The parents of a Year 8 Indian girl talked about the school placements of all their children. The eldest had given them greatest concern: *R (Karamdeep's older sister) is the only child who didn't go to a primary school here. She started in T. One of the reasons we moved was that she experienced problems there, yet it's only 10 minutes away from S (where they live currently). The children were really rude to her, and called her names. The ethnic makeup is similar in the two places, but S is more like a village, although it's big. T has got a large council estate area. We didn't tell the school, we just moved away. We had no idea what primary schools were going to be like here. R settled in well, and didn't have any problems.*

There were indications that some parents needed to feel assured that the choice of school would support whatever strategy they had developed for negotiating the child's sense of identity and group loyalty in an ethnically mixed society. It was striking that a number of the parents we interviewed had consciously rejected ethnically mixed schools in favour of a mainly white school. When we analysed the areas where this was mentioned, we found that the families tended to live near a multi-ethnic area that had a school with a poor reputation. In some cases it was possible to identify independent evidence that the parents' concerns had a firm foundation. For example, both the schools rejected by Abeerah's parents were put in special measures after their most recent Ofsted inspection.

Table 5.6
Reasoning about secondary school choices that related to the informants' minority ethnic status
2. Rejection of ethnically mixed schools

The mother of a Year 7 girl from a Pakistani background explained that she had wanted her to attend a school where there were not too many Asian pupils so that she would mix with English children. Hamidah put a slightly different slant on the decision. Her oldest sister went to C, another local secondary school. *"Mum put us here because she didn't like C... a lot of naughty kids there."*

When this issue was discussed with the parents of a Year 9 Indian girl, the mother eventually had to recall her own childhood in order to explain her feelings:
F: Well, the thing is, when there is a lot of Asians and, you know, say it's fifty-fifty, there's always racist comments and fights and things like that and we just didn't want that atmosphere... to be around our kids...
Another thing is the educational (thing). If there's a lot of Asians in the school, it does affect the education in some way, I can't explain how I feel about that.
I: What do you mean, it affects the education?
Mo: Um, they don't get the best, er, it's hard to explain how I feel but um... It's not the children, it's the staff, they're all, education in that school, I don't think they try as hard with Asians, maybe I'm, I'm saying it wrong, but that's the way I feel... Maybe it's coming out wrongly but I do [feel very strongly about that]... But you do understand where I'm coming from... er, because when I was younger there was a school just up the road, not even five minutes, and my dad wouldn't send me there. He made me walk like miles to go to this school, and there was only me there, one Asian, and that was me... And that was a better education, and maybe I got it from him, I don't know.

The Indian family of a Year 7 girl in a different county had moved there from an urban area. When her father was invited to compare her present school with a school she had attended previously in a multi-ethnic area, he said: "*I suppose the school she used to go to in L. had a lot of ethnic minorities in there. It was the majority of ethnic rather than the other way round, and she struggled with that because some of them couldn't speak English and all that. So she thought that she was getting left behind. Well not left behind but she was kept back rather than progressing...*"

The Korean mother of a boy in Year 7 from a dual heritage family was asked how they had chosen his secondary school:

Mo: This, particular school? Um, if I'm being very honest about it, the reputation itself is better than what we'd been given on other schools... And, uh, I am, as, personally, I find racism goes both ways. You know, black people can be very racist over white and white can be very racist towards black or oriental, or whatever, you know... At the primary school, where he went, they had a couple of, I think, Pakistan boys as well. And they always tended to cause trouble with, uh, Peter, because I think Peter was slightly different. He's not quite white, but then he's not quite oriental, either. So, they tend to pick on that as well. I mean, I, I had to really think careful where he's going to go. So, yes, I applied for this school and...

I: You chose this school partly because you felt it would be-

Mo: Less racist.

We were interviewing only in mainly white schools, so that the concerns that were expressed to us were those of parents who had rejected multi-ethnic schools. A counter-argument was put by a Year 8 girl from a Pakistani background:

> "*There aren't very many Asian people living round here, but there are quite a lot in L (nearby town). But they tend to go to the, I think it's a school called D, uh, Secondary School, and I think that school has a lot of, it is very mixed there. They have Chinese, they have African background kids, they have Asian, they have white, so it's very mixed there. And you can find people that you'd get along with easier. And I think you learn to, learn to get along with different people a bit better than you would here.*"

Several of the parents had had a struggle to gain admission to the school their child was now attending. A number had had applications to other schools rejected. Many had moved home in the course of their children's schooling, but they still valued the advantages of having all the children together in one school. In a subsample of four schools where we examined patterns of family attendance more closely eleven of the eighteen pupils whom we interviewed had older siblings in the same school. That was difficult to achieve if there was pressure on places and the family had moved – unless there was a whole family admission policy in place. Where such a policy operated, the families in this sample valued it highly. As we report more fully below, the children often saw older siblings as their most effective protection against racist name-calling and harassment.

5.6 Overview of findings

1. Why had the minority ethnic parents in our sample sent their children to mainly white schools? At primary school level, apart from those who chose a church school, most parents appear to have simply chosen the nearest school with places. Some were more selective, however, favouring schools with a record of educational success and rejecting schools where they did not like the ethos or thought the children's behaviour outside school unsatisfactory. In a very few cases parents had actually moved to an area in order to have access to a primary school in which they had confidence.

2. As is usually the case, the issue of choice of school was more sensitive for most of the parents at secondary school transfer. The parents and pupils we interviewed outlined a range of reasons for their choice of secondary schools. The most common factors in parental choice were a preference for schools with a strong record of academic success and the rejection of schools with a reputation for poor discipline or badly behaved pupils. Some of them had also been influenced by recommendations from family and friends or by a concern about exposing their children to the risk of a racist or hostile reception.

3. We noted that a number of the minority ethnic parents had deliberately avoided local schools with a high proportion of minority ethnic pupils. A variety of reasons were given for this. Individual parents believed (or were reported by their children to believe) that schools in the area with a higher proportion of minority ethnic pupils had many more problems. Different informants said that:
   - children's behaviour at those schools was worse overall;
   - there was racist tension between groups;
   - children stuck to their own groups and did not mix so well;
   - children from a dual heritage background who did not belong to any particular group risked being isolated or harassed;
   - children with a limited command of English held others back;
   - educational standards or teachers' expectations were lower.

   Such statements were made notably more often in those secondary schools in our sample which were on the outskirts of or near a multi-ethnic town in which one of the secondary schools had a poor reputation locally, had received a bad inspection report recently and/or was in special measures. Some parents had overcome considerable obstacles to secure a place for their child in a school they found acceptable, and a few were now travelling long distances each day to maintain it.

4. A number of the parents and children we interviewed were appreciative of whole family admissions policies where these were in operation, as isolated minority ethnic children particularly valued the support of older siblings in a mainly white school when this was available.

5. In an area with a high profile grammar school some minority ethnic parents felt that their children had been unfairly treated in the selection process - a view in which they were sometimes supported by those now teaching the child.

Chapter 6 Social environment in the community

Summary

The research questions addressed in this section are:

- How do minority ethnic parents and children see the relationship between their home culture and the ethos of the neighbourhood where they live?
- In what ways have the families developed and maintained links with the social and cultural life of the parents' original minority communities?

The principal findings reported here are:

- The families in our sample shared one characteristic: they all had a child who was a pupil at a mainly white school. Outside school, what was most striking about them was the variety of ways in which they related to white and minority ethnic communities in their neighbourhood and further afield.
- Two thirds of the children had some exposure to a community language within the household. Among those parents who were bilingual most would have liked their children to become fluent speakers of their own first language. Few of the children were on track to do so, unless they had themselves come to the UK from overseas with a fluent command of the language already established.
- Participation in community religious education featured prominently in the daily lives of many Muslim children in the sample and played a part in the weekly routines of children from some other faith traditions. Regular attendance posed considerable challenges to those living at a distance from a centre of religious life, and a number of parents made individual, private arrangements to overcome these problems.

6.1 Introduction

The main purpose of the project was to investigate factors that might affect the pupils' educational achievements, and the focus of other sections of this report is almost entirely on their lives and work in school. We did not attempt to conduct a comprehensive investigation of the families' experiences of the social environment in their areas where they lived. However, it will be obvious from the analysis in the previous chapter that it is not possible to reach a full understanding of the children's educational performance without examining some aspects of their lives outside school hours. Our enquiries focused on those questions with the most direct bearing on the children's education:

- In what aspects of social and cultural life did the families participate?
- How much did the children learn and use community languages?
- What part did religious practice and religious education play in the children's lives outside school?

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6.2 Observations made by children and parents

While the families in the project all sent the child we were studying to a mainly white school, they varied greatly in how they related to the majority community in their neighbourhood. Some families were well established in a mainly white area, the parents had relaxed relationships with their neighbours, and the children had many white friends. There might also be strong contacts with a network of people from their own background - family, friends and co-religionists. In contrast to many inner city areas, however, few of the parents or children maintained genuinely multiethnic social contacts in which a number of people from different backgrounds participated. In most cases the parents' relationships with people from other backgrounds appeared to be pleasant and polite but not intimate. Exceptions included Family H who were described in Chapter 5 and some mixed or dual heritage families who are described in Chapter 11.

Table 6.1 Families/children with social networks in both majority and minority communities
Srimad is a Year 8 boy from an Indian Jain background. Most of his school friends do not live near him, and he does not see them often outside school. He has a different group of friends at home. Both groups are white. Some Year 10 students in his school speak Gujerati. He knows them from an Indian group he belongs to that meets in the nearest town. They organise activities, put on plays, etc. For five years he attended a weekly language class in Gujerati but gave up a year ago shortly after starting at secondary school.
Jabir, a Year 8 boy, was born in this country to Muslim parents who had come here from Mauritius. Both sets of grandparents and most of the family still live in Mauritius, though they have some relatives in London and Manchester. There are other families from Mauritius in the nearest town, which is multiethnic in character, and his parents keep in contact with them. Jabir goes to the mosque in that town nearly every day to read the Koran and learn about Islam. His mother said that their white neighbours received them well when they moved in some years ago. The one man who was not pleasant moved away soon after they arrived. They enjoy good relations with their neighbours now. For example, when they go away, neighbours tend their garden and mow their lawn without being asked. They receive flowers and cards at Christmas from them.
Naseema is a Year 8 girl living in a similar area in another region. Her parents who came from Pakistan own and run a corner shop. She has white friends in school and some Urdu-speaking friends outside school *"mainly through my mum contacting their mum then ... make us friends"*. Her dad is well respected locally, and people recognise her because of the shop. She quite likes this. *N: Whenever, like, I go out with my dad or my mum, you, it's impossible to go out without anyone saying "Hello" "I remember you from the shop" or "I remember you when you were little when we were at the shop" - it's getting very embarrassing!...* *I: Sorry, I'm just checking this. So being a member of the family who own that shop makes you, sort of, well known in the neighbourhood?...* *N: Yeah, it can get a bit boring at times, but it's nice to make, know that people do actually know you and they, and then people respect my dad greatly ..* *I: What do you think it is about how he runs his shop that makes them respect him?* *N: I think he doesn't tolerate kids who muck about. If you're mucking about, then my dad's going to say, "Go outside and muck about". And the adults obviously find this good, 'cause then they don't have to deal with the little children in the shop. And then the old people come in and all they want to do is talk about the 'good old times' and how children today aren't, they're not very good and they should be seen and not heard and... But I think my dad allows everybody in the shop, but if you're ... He doesn't tolerate nuisance.*

Safeer is in Year 9. His father, who owns a taxi firm, came to this country from Pakistan as a child. For many years he and his brother were the only Asians in their school. There are now four brothers and one sister all living with their families in the nearby multiethnic town and the surrounding area. He and one of his brothers have held leading positions in the local Asian/Muslim community. There are few Punjabi speakers in B, the village near the school where Safeer's immediate family live. They moved there from the ethnic enclave in the town because they wanted a bigger house and because of crime in the town. Safeer recalled the move. It was *"a bit weird, a bit quieter than W... It's a big quiet street. Got used to it, made friends."*

Close family friends from the same area of Pakistan then moved to a house nearby. This is good for his mother who does not speak English. She works in an assembly line job with other Asian women, while his father relates to a wide range of people in his work and uses English all the time. He hoped that there would be a balance between the children having only Asian and only white friends. They need both, he felt. But he thought they could manage it in the white area where they now lived because he remained a community leader in the town. Moving away might otherwise have cut them off:
But, when there are so many Asian children in one particular group or one particular school, uh, they have, uh, this tendency to be mixed within. And not come out of the hole... to get to the step further... They will stay in the same place... The admission within them is that, "No, it doesn't matter". But if I was to take, I mean, for argument's sake, Pakistan or India, there, which is the majority of them, they have an ambition to achieve that top ladder... But here, it takes a total reverse. It's like they are all protective of themselves, and they don't move forward... So, the idea is to integrate and move forward, with the right ambitions, so slightly mixed is better than all in one... That is the reasons why some of them would deliberately move their child, 'cause it doesn't start looking on the inside... it looks at little bit outwards and to integrate and to look out further a little bit, with the confidence.... You will get, for argument's sake, you will get, if somebody says, "Well I'm not having my children, too many Pakistani children going to school. I'm taking him and putting him into a school which is, the majority is, is white children". Someone from the community would say, "Well, he wants to be totally, uh, isolated... He doesn't want to mix... He wants to be, you know... outside the community", as you put it. Um, and he may well take that label, but then again, then the children will also start to lose a bit of the culture... But there is a danger of that. Therefore, it's always nice to have a, a healthy mix.

In evaluating what our informants had to say it is important to bear in mind that people of higher socio-economic status were over-represented in the sample. A Sikh parent with a professional job in the health service made the link between race and class explicit:

> *Mo: In L... there was a problem. But part of the problem was that we were coloured and part of the problem was that we were socially different. I mean, although my background is working class, but they were, you know, like they'd come from a council estate. Just the language was different, and we were just, we were different anyway, but that made us different as well, which I think alienated us too... Interestingly, one of my (laughs), one of my friends who is my friend now, she was saying to er, something, issue of colour or whatever obviously does come up. And she was saying, she said oh, I don't mean to be awful, but she said um, I'd much rather my children played with your children than the children (laughing) from the estate. And I thought, you know, there's so much, it's not only a colour thing, it's a class thing, it's, you know, there's just so much there, isn't it? And it's amazing how many barriers everyone, not just white people, you know, just everyone generally with each other, whether it's somebody of a different colour, or of a different class kind of barriers they put up, and how difficult it is to surmount those that you don't happen to fit in with. But that, to me was very interesting.*
> *I: Yeah, how did you feel about that? (laughs)*

Mo: I just thought it was really odd (laughs). 'Cos I'd never really considered it. But in her own way she was just saying that it doesn't matter to me that the children, 'cos she said I'd never really thought of them as different, whereas I probably would if they were.. She said I'd much rather that my children played with your children. And I thought, how strange, 'cos it would never occur to me not to let the children play with children who'd come from a council estate. And yet they're really, really supportive here. You know, like, they go out of their way, and as I said, you know, when I was ill, with my four children, that they would get the children from school for me.

Some members of families that were well integrated in their local mainly white community had concerns about a cultural deficit in some aspects of their lives. Thus Nathan's mother, whose parents had come to England from St Vincent in the West Indies, would have liked shops to have more on sale specifically for the Black Caribbean community, and Karamdeep's older sister regretted the lack of a Sikh youth club locally:

I don't know if it's the same for the other kids but we actually feel like we miss out on stuff from our own culture. We often say why can't we go to this, or why can't we go to that, 'cos we live so far away. 'Cos up in Southall and Hayes they have functions and, where all the kids get together and do things, and like there's a Sikh community centre. There's actually a youth centre for Sikh! And we do actually, I don't know about the others but I actually do feel that I miss out on things.... it's a long way to travel just to go to a youth centre.

As Table 6.2 shows, some children who had little contact with friends outside school had to travel a substantial distance to maintain contact with peers from the same cultural background. As would be expected, parents and children who had lived in an area for a short time were more likely to have a relatively restricted social network. Children who commuted to their mainly white school from an minority ethnic enclave tended to have separate networks at school and at home.

Table 6.2 Families/children with more restricted social networks
Ben, who is in Year 8, was born in this country to parents who had come here from China. He attends a Chinese school on Saturdays each week. His grandmother lives near the Chinese school, which is a 30 mile round trip from his home. His father takes him there on a Friday, and he sleeps at his grandmother's home overnight. He has three or four friends there but does not see them except at the school itself. His father has three Chinese friends locally where they live but Ben does not. He has many friends at school, none of whom is Chinese. He occasionally goes skateboarding with some who live near him, but generally he does not play out much because his parents *"want me to work"*.
Sadiq is a Year 8 boy from a Pakistani background. His father had lived in West London when he first came to the UK, but after a few years moved to the small multiethnic town in the home counties where they now live. He came there because his extended family was already living in the town. They found L a friendly and welcoming place. There is a Mosque at the end of their road, and quite a few Muslim families live in the neighbourhood. Their social life is restricted to this group. Sadiq is aware of other children from the same background at his school. He knows them but does not normally mix with them in school. At home all his friends are Muslim, at school they are all white.

Pramsu's parents came from Mauritius to take up nursing posts in a large conurbation. After two years they sent for their two children who had been living with their grandmother in Mauritius. They have moved house since to a quieter neighbourhood, and the children were unsettled by the move. But all of them are now acclimatising to the new situation. Pramsu, who is in Year 5, is a shy child but he has developed a friendship with the boy next door. This has reached a point where his mother tells them:

"You can't spend the whole time in each other's houses." They have no relatives in this country, and the parents find it difficult to maintain links with acquaintances from Mauritius because of work schedules, though they see friends at festivals and celebrations. They are Hindus but do not participate in organised religious observance here, because *"the temples are Indian, and we are not members of that community"*.

Sachi is one of a number of Japanese pupils in her comprehensive school, though there are no others in her year. They all have a parent working at a local Japanese-owned factory, and the families tend to live in this country for just 2 - 3 years before returning to Japan. She travels to school with local white friends each morning and finds that *"everybody's kind"* where she lives. But she reported a problem in communicating with friends at school: *"My friends talk about TV programmes, and I don't watch English TV because I watch Japanese programmes and videos."* She likes going to the Japanese School on Saturdays, *"because I can talk with the students"*. She has a number of Japanese friends there.

Most families got on well with their neighbours, but a small number had faced opposition and hostility either when they moved into an area or as they got to know the people living there. While only a minority of the parents had experienced open racism, many were keenly aware of the risks. Racism at school will be discussed in the next chapter. Table 6.3 illustrates what had happened to some families in the areas where they lived and how they responded.

Table 6.3 Responding to racial harassment in the community

Mandy, who is now in Year 4, came as a refugee from Sierra Leone two years ago. Her adoptive mother, who also came from there many years earlier, has been living in the same house for twelve years. During all that time just one boy had caused trouble on the grounds of their race, e.g. calling Marie and her brother black Pakis. After a few incidents Mandy's mother saw the boy's mother, and it did not happen again. She tries to teach her children how to handle incidents like that without creating more trouble and does not let it worry her.

Joshua's parents, who live in a largely white suburb of a large city, came to this country from the Caribbean before he was born. Their strong Evangelican Christian beliefs influence every aspect of the way they conduct their lives. His mother says that their neighbours have not been unpleasant, but Joshua (who is now in Year 9) and his brothers and sister have sometimes complained that a neighbour's children had called them names. His mother relates how she talks to both sets of children:
The Lord makes different flowers in the garden, so he makes us different, but that doesn't mean that you don't get on. And away they go and play again. I take both children and talk to them, and sometimes say to my children that don't worry, people probably see us different, but we're not, and explain things as best as I can. I mean, I can't go righting the world for everybody, but I can only do what I can do.
When she was pressed, she explained:
There's been a bit of trouble, not trouble, misunderstandings occasionally. Of a small racist aspect as it were. It's not something that happens everyday, not something I have to deal with often. Less than twice a year. They get called "chocolate". ... When you hear about big racism in the media, so far they have had nothing on that scale. My husband says we're lucky, I say that God is keeping his eye on us.

Yusra, who is in Year 5, has an Egyptian father and a British-born mother whose parents came here from Eastern Europe. The family have moved between Cairo and the prosperous suburban estate where we met them. It emerged at a late stage that they were about to move back to Cairo because of their experiences of racism here. This interview included Yusra's mother and 21 year old sister (S).

I: How is it with the neighbours around here?
Mo: Basically if you are not all white family you're no one.
S: You have got to be one or the other.

Mo: We have been here about ten years and we were the only 'dark' family, although we are not dark as you can see. I moved in whilst my husband was in London. I moved in here for a year. The day my husband came up here it was weird. Nobody wanted to know. The people next door are a nice couple, but when you go out they go in. They don't say good morning. They were all chatty at first until they saw my husband and then they didn't want to know. That is up to them, but you don't judge people by what colour they are.
I: They are very stand offish?
S: It is hard because the lady next door, her brother has married someone from a different country. He is a Muslim and so is his wife. So I don't understand why.
Mo: That is when the children are brought up wrong. The little boy shouts through the fence to the little one.

A key feature of the communal environment for some families was their use of a community language and their participation in community or religious education. These were mentioned briefly in the last chapter as two activities through which ethnic identification is expressed. Community provision of this kind operates within a triangle:

- offering companionship and social support to people with a shared background;
- developing and maintaining culturally important skills - languages above all, but not only languages;
- facilitating and providing instruction in religious beliefs and practices.

These functions may sometimes conflict. An example of this was given by Sabirah, the daughter of Iraqi refugees, who was now in Year 8. Her family moved into the area because her father's brother and his family already lived locally. But her parents have not felt comfortable attending the well-supported mosque in the local town, as most of the congregation are Pakistani. Instead, the family travels a much longer distance to the mosque in a larger town where no one group dominates and they use English as the lingua franca. There is still a problem though, because their children do not like going to religious classes in the accessible local mosque because, as Sabirah put it, *"it's all Pakistani kids speaking Urdu"*. Sachi, whose participation in a Japanese school was described in Table 6.2, gave a sharp retort when talking about its curriculum. She had explained that they spend three hours on Japanese language and two hours on mathematics each Saturday. When the interviewer asked if they teach religion or anything else at the school, she replied: *"No. They teach important things."*

A summary of the use of languages at home is given in Table 6.4, augmenting the information given when the case studies were introduced in Chapter 4. It will be seen that two thirds of the children had some exposure to a community language within their household. The language that comes first in each cell is the one spoken most commonly within the family as they described it to us. English is the only or the dominant language of the household in over half the families. But a simple listing of this kind cannot record the role of each of the families' languages in their everyday lives. Table 5.1 in Chapter 5 and Table 6.5 below present some illustrative accounts of the complex patterns of usage that the children and parents reported. An important feature of these children's experience

of the use of community languages was that, unlike children in more balanced multiethnic schools, their exposure at home was their main exposure to the language. Few of them had the opportunity to extend their use of it at school and to develop code switching strategies in the company of peers outside the family.

Table 6.4 Languages spoken in the family home

English	21	English/Arabic	1	Arabic/English	1	Bengali/Hindi	1
		English/(French Creole)*	1	Cantonese/English	2	Buganda	1
		English/Greek	1	Creole-Patois/English	1	Cantonese	1
		English/Gujerati	1	Gujerati/English	3	Japanese	2
		English/(Gujerati)	1	Haka/(English)	1	Punjabi	1
		English/(Hindi)	1	Punjabi/English	4	Sinhala***	1
		English/Ijaw**	1	Rwandan/English	1		
		English/Punjabi	2	Urdu/English	5		
		English/(Somali)	1	Urdu/(English)	1		
		English/"Ugandan"	1	Urdu/Punjabi/English	1		
		English/Urdu	2				
Total	21		13		20		7

* Where a language is placed in brackets, it is not used regularly at home by the target child.
** Nigerian dialect
*** Described by informant as "Sri Lankan"

Table 6.5 Patterns of language use reported by children and parents

Saad, who is in Year 6, came to this country from Uganda with his sister about six months before our interview. His mother, who had been here for several years, spoke with all the children in Buganda during the visit, except when she was including the interviewer in the conversation. She explained their fluency in the original family language in terms of their age when they left Uganda. She said that she insists on them speaking it at home. She does not want them to forget their language. They will learn English as well. *"They are so lucky knowing two languages. There is no reason why they speak here English with me. They can speak English. But I told them - you can speak English whenever you are with your friends, but when you come back - Buganda."* They also speak it with her nephew, who is here, and with her friends. But otherwise they do not use it at all.

Avtar, who is in Year 9, explained that his parents both use English with him and his siblings, although they speak Punjabi to each other a little.

A: uh, my dad speaks it mostly, but my mum just says, uses it now and then or when, she's, like, speaking to a relative or something.
I: Right. And your grandparents, you use English with?
A: Uh, they're all passed away, so
I: Right ... all your friends in the classroom, in the playground, you use English with.
A: English, yeah.
I: Do you speak Punjabi at all?
A: I can speak it, but I don't use it.
I: Right. So if, if I were from Pakistan and I started talking Punjabi to you,
A: Yeah.
I: You could understand it?
A: Yeah.
I: Um, but you probably would struggle a bit to answer me.
A: Yeah.
I: Could you carry on a conversation, if we needed to?
A: I could, but it would take me a bit of time to get the words out.

Hamidah, Year 7, was one of the younger children in a large family born in this country to parents who had come here from Pakistan. Her father said: *"My parents live with us. They understand English, but don't speak it much. Dad's 78, mum is 67. Neither are very well. Kids speak English among themselves, and to me, but mother and grandparents they would communicate with in Urdu. The school ignores our language, doesn't do anything to support it."*
Peter in Year 7 was born in this country to an English father and a Korean mother. She talked of how difficult it was when they visited her family in Korea. *"It was very difficult, because I want him to learn the Korean language, so I usually spoke to him in Korean, but he will never answer me back in Korean, and, uh, he sees himself, uh, he's a bit handicapped, being, having a foreign mother. And uh, he, just refuse me back in Korean."* In fact, though, the visit did not go badly. His cousins there *"speak reasonably good English... They had a really good time last time, when they were there."*
Few of the children had opportunities to use their family's original language in school. Maha, in Year 7, illustrated some of the factors in this when she talked about very occasionally using Urdu when with her friend Yaminah. But they do not like it when a boy in the same year group chooses to use it. *"Like, he, he's just doing it for fun. He's in my Maths group and he just does it for fun... He's got English friends, but he just uses it to, like, he just shows off in front of his friends.* *I: Right. You feel that if someone uses Urdu in school when there's children who don't speak it around, then they're showing off?* *M: Yeah, they are, because he's got, he mostly gets detentions, he's one of those boys and so is his friend, they get in trouble a lot and he, like, does it to my friend. He says something in Urdu and he'll get really annoyed. If he keeps on saying it and you don't answer back, he just, like, he just gets really on your nerves."*

As quotations from parents in Table 5.1 illustrated, there were different views among our informants about children's participation in community religious education. Many of the Muslim children in the sample attended a late afternoon religious class or school on a daily or almost daily basis. For example, Aarif (Year 6) went to the Mosque every day except Saturday and said he liked it; Hamidah (Year 7) attended four days a week and was seen by her father as enjoying it as a "social gathering for females". The contrast in teaching styles with local authority schools was salient for some children, and a minority were uncomfortable with it. For example, Jabal (Year 4), who also attended daily, talked of the close supervision in his class and the feeling that the staff *"all look at us"* as they read. Maha's mother had withdrawn her and her siblings from a mosque class because the teacher was too strict with her youngest child and put them off. In any case he *"had very little education in Arabic actually.... And I took them off Mosque. And then we've got this lady from the Middle East and she's voluntarily, I mean, helping my children to... read... their Islamic from their books. And that happens only once a week, on Sundays, for two hours."* Similarly Saad, whose mother was quoted above, did not attend a mosque school and was taught the Koran at home by his cousin. He explained that there is no mosque locally and where they lived when he first arrived in England there was only an Asian mosque, *"and we're not Asian"*. The family maintains dietary laws strictly, but none of them participates in communal religious activities at all.

6.3 Overview of findings

1. The families in our sample shared one characteristic: they all had a child who was a pupil at a mainly white school. Outside school, what was most striking about them was the variety of ways in which they related to white and minority ethnic communities in their neighbourhood and further afield.

2. The small number of families who were socially isolated were mainly people who had arrived recently from overseas. Members of ethnic groups that had a well-established community in this country showed distinctive patterns of social integration.

3. Some children travelled to school from a neighbourhood where there were many other families from the same ethnic or cultural background. Others lived in a mainly white area but had regular social contact with people who shared their background and lived some distance away.

4. In mainly white areas the majority of the minority ethnic children enjoyed relaxed and friendly relations with some age peers in their neighbourhood. But there were a number of examples of social separation either because a minority family was treated with hostility by people who had lived in the area for longer or (rarely) because parents from overseas did not want their children to participate in the usual activities associated with contemporary youth culture in the area.

5. Among those parents who were bilingual most would have liked their children to become fluent speakers of their own first language. Few of the children were on track to do so, unless they had themselves come to the UK from overseas with a fluent command of the language already established. Participation in community language classes formed an important element in the social lives of the majority of the children from Chinese and Japanese backgrounds.

6. Participation in community religious education featured prominently in the daily lives of many Muslim children in the sample and played a part in the weekly routines of children from some other faith traditions. Regular attendance posed considerable challenges to those living at a distance from a centre of religious life, and a number of parents made individual, private arrangements to overcome the problems.

Chapter 7 Social environment at school

Part 1 Friendship and social integration

This chapter is concerned with the social environment at school. The first part examines the positive side of the school social environment - the friendships that children have there and their social integration. The larger, second part is devoted to the negative experiences that may be associated with being a minority ethnic pupil in a mainly white school - experiences of bullying and racism. It is important to be aware of both aspects of the experience of the children in our sample.

Summary

The research questions addressed in this section are:

- How do children and young people from minority ethnic groups see/experience their lives in mainly white schools, specifically their social relationships with their peers?
- Do children from minority ethnic backgrounds face particular social challenges when they are admitted to a mainly white school at an atypical time?

The principal findings reported here are:

- The majority of the children who had been at their school for a significant length of time were well integrated socially and enjoyed the same range of patterns of friendship within their peer group as would be expected of any other children in these schools. In addition, a minority had a small network of acquaintances from their own ethnic community either at school or based on their parents' network at home.
- A significant proportion of the children whom we interviewed had started their present school or their previous school at a different time from most other pupils. It seems likely that on average children from minority ethnic backgrounds in mainly white areas will have experienced more moves between schools than their peers. The reasons in our sample include arriving from another country as a refugee or asylum seeker, moving from the UK to another country and back again, and the family moving because of racist incidents in their neighbourhood or because of a change of job or a desire for better or cheaper accommodation.
- In the accounts that these children gave of their own experiences of starting school and in advice and fictional narratives on this topic from all the children it was evident that the social challenges in the situation worried most of them more than the challenges relating to school work. Concern about missing old friends and, in particular, ideas about how to develop new friendships or alliances featured at the top of the list of what they had to say about starting at a different school.

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7.1 Introduction

Friendship and social alliances are of crucial importance to children's experience of school. Friends are a source of support at times of stress. It is within the framework of friendship that basic social skills for communication and co-operation are honed, as well as the ability to handle intimacy outside the family. Within friendships too children can develop a positive sense of identity through seeing themselves as valued in others' eyes (Hartup, 1992).

Studies of patterns of friendship in balanced multiethnic schools have suggested that associations across ethnic groupings are common (Denscombe et al, 1993; Woods et al, 1999). But a significant proportion of school friendships are formed on the basis of a shared culture or ethnic background - a proportion that increases as children approach adolescence (Ryan, 1999). Friendship in a culturally diverse classroom in Atlanta, Georgia was studied by Deegan (1996) some decades after school desegregation. He found that "racial or ethnic dissonance" was not as much an obstacle to children negotiating friendships as what he called "life-situational dissonance", i.e. major differences of domestic life style (p. 50). The question addressed in the first section of this part of the chapter is whether the minority ethnic pupils in our sample formed similar friendship patterns in schools where they were, in ethnic terms, potentially socially isolated.

Children face a particular social challenge when they move school and are often anxious about it (Galton and Willcocks, 1983; Measor and Woods, 1984). Ethnicity has been linked to high pupil mobility in a number of urban studies (e.g. Dobson and Henthorne, 1999), but we are not aware of any research on mobility among minority ethnic pupils in mainly white schools. Because of their family circumstances and histories (see chapters 5 and 6), it does seem likely that on average they will experience more moves between schools than their peers at the same schools. Our project was not designed to provide large-scale statistical evidence on the issue, but we did explore individual perspectives on the social challenges associated with starting school at an atypical time. A second section of this part of the chapter is devoted to this topic.

7.2 Observations made by children, parents and teachers

Friendship

The focus in this section is on the children in our sample who had been at their school for a significant length of time. This group had had time to develop patterns of friendship that might be expected to be stable over a period of time (Berndt and Hoyle, 1985). As they were ethnically different from the overwhelming majority of their peers, there could be concern that those patterns would be characterised by isolation and loneliness and that they would not be socially integrated in the peer group.

Such fears appeared to be groundless. The observations of parents, teachers and the children themselves indicated that they were well integrated socially and enjoyed the same range of friendships within their peer group as would be expected of any other children. For example, there were children who were seen by their teachers as very popular in their class or form and who reported a wide circle of friends, there were

children who were very close to a small number of intimate friends, and there were children with problems of different kinds who appeared to be on the fringe of various social networks, as Table 7.1 illustrates.

Table 7.1 Selected observations on the children's friendship patterns in school

Peter, a mixed heritage boy, had moved up from a local primary school with most of his Year 6 class. His two closest friends at this school were white boys whom he had known for a long time. One lived near him, and the other had gone to nursery school with him.
Safeer, a Year 9 boy from a Pakistani background, had moved to the secondary school where we met him from a different area. The family's move of house had coincided with the time when he was due to transfer to secondary school. His father said that, because he did not have any friends there at first: *F: ... he was very hesitant, very reluctant and I think the first few months were hard for him... They were not easy. Uh, he was feeling very lonesome, um, he was trying to build up friendship, but he's a tough child, so he, he's done well... Now, now he's, he's settled in, I think, much more.* Safeer himself reported that the alliances he formed in that first year proved important when he was briefly the butt of racist jokes. It was not a serious problem, and he did not involve teachers. *S: ... I just talked to, like, um, talked to a couple of mates and they, like, talked to the people who were telling, saying jokes about me.* *I: And they told them to stop.* *S: Yeah*
By Year 4 when we met her Semira had attended four schools - two in Jamaica and two in England. Her parents had separated, and each had remarried. She had moved several times. *S: I have never had much friends in any school I went to... I don't have friends in this school either.* *I: Really. Why do you think that is?* *S: I don't want to play with them. I don't have many friends. I don't go to different classes and say I have got no one to play with and you play with them. I only have friends that are people in my class. That's it.* Her class teacher had a more positive picture, thinking that she had *"settled in very quickly. There are some very nice girls in the class that tucked her under their wing... As far as I am aware there did not seem to be any difference in accepting her than as they did with the new one (a white child) that has just joined."*
Rafiq, a Year 8 boy from a mixed heritage Malaysian/Pakistani background, was attending a secondary school some distance from his home. He had three close friends at school from different backgrounds. They had met during the induction day at the school and remained friends since. Rafiq turns to friends for help with school work and has been told off in a history class for talking about the work when they were supposed to be silent.
Josie, a Year 9 girl from a Pakistani background, was observed by her form tutor to have *"close friends within the tutor group and elsewhere. Her ethnic background has never been an issue. Don't know whether that's right or wrong, but she has integrated beautifully... Parents are very adamant that she's called Josie. Teachers had to be told 'I want to be called Josie'. Almost 'I'm like everybody else'... (She is) quite mature, doesn't have the fallings out that you often get with girls at that age. Her friendships are very secure. Her friends tend to be the more able children within the tutor group. She's at ease with the boys; they aren't as mature as the girls. Very reliable. Bit of a chatterbox - that's her one weakness but maybe in the future it will be a strength.*
Samuel (Year 8) has a language problem, receives regular learning support and is seen by his teachers as rather immature. Playing football in a large group had a significant role in his social life at school. He is not close to any particular boys but tends, as he puts it, to *"hang around with everybody"*. When he had originally started at secondary school, he would often turn to his older brother for social support and says: *"I've got loads of friends because of D."* Talking about a boy who was new to the school he said: *"And if my brother, if my brother was a friend of him, was a friend of him, then all his friends that he had would become his friends."*

Football had played a rather different role in the social life of Kirsty, a Year 6 girl from a mixed Black Caribbean/White British background. She and the woman researcher who interviewed her laughed together when she described how she used to go to football classes with her (white) best friend from school. It was OK, but they got bored and cold and had to wear shorts. The friendship is of long standing. Kirsty was attending a primary school near her home, which she had gone to straight from nursery.

As was illustrated in Chapter 6, many of the children had friendships outside school that focused on their own ethnic group. Within a mainly white school the scope for that was more limited. Some of the children were surprised or embarrassed to be asked about it. This example comes from Anuradha, a Year 7 girl from an Indian background:

> *I: Are there a lot of Hindu pupils in this school?*
>
> *A: I don't really know (laughs). I haven't heard people talking Hindi or anything, and yes I'm not friends with that many Hindu people. They're mostly white. But I have a Muslim friend if that counts (laugh) I don't know.*

Even so, in spite of the apparent obstacles, a minority had a small network of acquaintances at school from their own ethnic community. These were often, though by no means always, based on their parents' networks at home. For example, Srimad, a Year 8 boy from an Indian background, had good friends in his own class at school who were all white. He was also friends with an Indian boy in Year 9 and a couple more in Year 10. In each case their parents were friends of his parents and he had originally met them outside school.

Solidarity in the face of threat may be one factor in these alliances. Savarna, a Year 4 girl from an Indian background, listed a number of white friends she had known from her street and her playgroup before she started at her present school.

> *S: So it was really easy for me to fit in this school, but now when, there's a girl in Class 5. She's called Sandeep. I'm friends with her as well because she's Indian, and I started this school before her, and I'm friends with her as well. She's in one class above me, but we walk home from school together.*
>
> *I: And are you very glad now there's another Indian girl here? Tell me again why you're specially glad now Sandeep's here.*
>
> *S: Because when that girl calls me I've got someone to stick up with, and she can say "Well if you're calling Savarna (names), you're calling me as well. So there's really no point calling one person and calling the other person as well".*

Thus a small number of the children had the support of school peers from the same minority ethnic group. However, it was more common for them to develop friendships across cultural and religious boundaries without a reference group who shared their background. This was most challenging when different value systems came into play, especially as they approached early adolescence. For example, one of the older pupils we interviewed was getting into a white drug culture based around his school, experimenting with 'speed' and 'coke'. His mother, who was not aware of this, was more concerned about the Asian group that he also mixed with, a bad influence as she saw it.

C: Um, if I went out with Asian people, I wouldn't even, like, smoke. Well, I probably would on the side,... but in front of everyone, I wouldn't. But if I went out with, like, white friends, it would be, like, straight away out onto ...

I: That's smoking.

C: Yeah.... I could stop now, I could just say, like, I dunno, I wouldn't be nothing like... I don't do all the things... Probably, the furthest I'd go would be coke... Only one other Asian can smoke... And he don't deal.

I: Just one of your Asian friends smokes and he doesn't do any drugs at all.

C: Yeah.

I: So it really is your white friends that you're drawn into this with...

C: It's 'cause it's so easy to get hold of.

More commonly, the focus of concern was a difference in expectations around relationships with the opposite sex. Naseema, a Year 8 Pakistani girl, explained the problem:

N: And I'd probably say that if you want to fit in, you probably need to get friends who understand you and your background and they accept what you do and it'd probably be easier for her to get Asian friends first. And it's not that hard to make white friends, but it can be a bit intimidating.

I: I wonder what an Asian girl would find intimidating about making white friends.

N: Well, I think it's mainly the fact that most girls in this school, put it... I can't really put it in a nice way, but most of them are, like, very, not high-strung, but they're just really... I don't know how to put it in a nice way, but - very tarty.

I: It's all right.

N: Like, you know, very tarty.

I: They're very tarty? What do you have in mind when you say that?

N: They, well, they just constantly, constantly won't stop talking about make-up, boys, and it just does your head in! It really does, when they just won't talk about something else. I mean, fine, it's all right for, like, maybe a few lessons, but if you keep going on about it, it sort of bores you.

I: Right. And this girl, who's going to start at this school, what do you think, if she had Asian friends, girls who were her friends, what would they talk about that was different from what the white girls talk about?

N: I think they wouldn't really talk about the same things. I don't think they'd talk about boys as a main thing, because if you're Asian, you're brought up in, like, a society that doesn't really allow you to, like, have boyfriends and go, like, drinking, obviously, and smoke and stuff. So I think it's probably be easier for her to talk to them, instead of the girls, the other girls bringing up... She'd probably feel uncomfortable 'cause she wasn't, wouldn't be used to hearing this all the time.

I: I suppose one of the difficulties for this girl would be that there really aren't very many Asian girls in the school.

N: Yes.

I: Um, and that, you said, makes, makes it more difficult.

N: Yeah.

I: What's been your solution to that?

N: Well, I, I have, mainly all my friends are white. But they, they understand me and they know that I'm Muslim and I, I take my faith properly and I don't, like, slack on it and I don't, you know, okay, usually, eat, um, not a lot of food, or, like, not pray, or... And, well, I just think that it's, there's not many Asian girls and there's no point moping about it. You might as well make friends, so.

This was not only an Asian Muslim view. Saad's mother from Uganda talked disparagingly about *"this business of boyfriends and girlfriends at school. It cannot happen at home."* Arthur, a Year 6 boy from Guyana, found it simply puzzling. When invited to ask if there was anything he wanted to add at the end of an interview, he said: *"Why do children keep talking about boyfriend and girlfriend?"* In Part 2 of this chapter below it will be seen that these areas of confusion and misunderstanding were small obstacles compared to the much greater social impediments that the children encountered at school in the form of racism and bullying.

The experiences of children who started school at an atypical time

Many of the children whom we interviewed had started their present school or their previous school at a different time from most other pupils. There were various reasons for this, some of which will be more common among minority ethnic families than families from the majority community. For example, in the three case study schools highlighted below it will be seen that some children had come to this country as refugees or to join their parents who were working for the health service. One family had moved out of an ethnic enclave to a mainly white area because they felt that there would be less crime there. A range of further reasons were given by parents of children in the other schools in the sample. In two schools the most frequent admissions of minority ethnic pupils were the children of Japanese executive staff at a local Japanese-owned manufacturing or commercial facility. Most of the children stayed in the schools for two years, though some stayed for longer.

Case study Experiences of school continuity and mobility reported by minority ethnic families at three schools
Five Oaks Secondary School
Five Oaks is a mixed secondary school in a "comfortable" suburb on the outskirts of a small market town, N. Of the eight minority ethnic children we interviewed there five were born and live in N, attended a single local primary school and came up to Five Oaks at the beginning of Year 7 with others from the same school. One of these, Sadiq, has had two extended trips to Pakistan. He stayed for about 6 months when aged 9 and for about 2 months when aged 11. One girl who is also from a Pakistani background, was born and lives in N and attended a primary school there. But she came up to Five Oaks six months into Year 7 when her parents had won an appeal after they had rejected two high schools in N which had been offered by the LEA. A boy whose parents came to this country from Mauritius, was born in another area of the same region in the UK, went to Australia with his family at the age of five, and attended school there for two years. They returned to UK, and the family settled in N where he attended primary school from Year 3. He came up to Five Oaks at the beginning of Year 7. He was the only child to come to Five Oaks from his primary school. A girl was born in Iraq, where she attended school. Her family came to N as political refugees when she was 8 years old, settling there because of a family connection. They had spent a year in Turkey (where she attended school). She then attended a local primary school and came up to Five Oaks at the beginning of Year 7 with cousins. Her older brother was already there.

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The Beeches Secondary School
The Beeches is a mixed secondary school in a socially mixed area of mainly owner occupied housing on the edge of a small commuter town. Two of the six children we interviewed there lived in the same home in the area throughout their primary school years and attended a single local primary school before moving up to The Beeches with many children from their old schools. A boy, who had an East African Asian background grew up in Essex and moved to this area at start of Year 7. So he did not know anyone when he began secondary school at the same time in Year 7 as everyone else and most of them had established primary school friendships. A girl, who had a Pakistani background was born and grew up in Scotland until her parents split up when she was nine. She then came to this area with her mother and siblings and started at a new primary school. They had moved once since then within the same area. A boy who also had a Pakistani background changed primary schools during Year 3 when his family moved from a multiethnic area of a nearby town to an area close to The Beeches to get away from what he called the "*high tension*" in their former area. "*There was a lot of things wrong... break-ins and that*". They have lived in the same home since but he was the only child from his primary school who came to this school in Year 7. A boy with a dual heritage (English/Korean) background changed primary schools in Year 3 or 4 when his parents moved home and then attended a primary school in the catchment area of The Beeches Secondary school from which he transferred with others in the usual way.
Lime Park Junior School
This school is situated in an area of mainly rented housing that includes a large council estate in an outer London borough. The area has had very few minority ethnic families until recently when there has been a small increase. All of the four children we interviewed there had joined the school within the last two years. A boy came from the Caribbean the previous summer and started in Year 5 in Lime Park Juniors shortly after the beginning of the autumn term. It had taken some time for his mother to find a school place for him. A girl came from Sierra Leone two years previously to get out of a war-torn area and join a member of her extended family in London. She started at Lime Park Infants in Year 2. A boy came with his sister from Guyana eighteen months previously to join their parents who were both working in a local hospital. He went to school in Guyana before coming here. He started at Lime Park Juniors in Year 4. A boy started at Lime Park Juniors the previous term. He had already been living in the area for some months but there was no school place for him initially. He came to this country from Uganda when he was 11. He was in Year 6 and was due to join his brother and sister in secondary school in September.

When we asked the children about the challenges of moving school at an atypical time, they highlighted concerns about the social challenges. These examples come from stories told by some of the younger children in response to their story completion task.

I: So were there any problems?

L: Mme, just getting to know friends. (Luke, Year 6)

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I: What do you think she was worried about the most?
M: She was worried about...would she make any friends?
I: Mm. I'm trying to think of a reason why she was worried that she wouldn't make any friends.
M: Because she didn't know anyone.
I: Mm.
M: She didn't know what the children do. (Mohini, Year 3)

Older children were asked to suggest what we should put in a handbook for a pupil from their background starting in their school. Commonly they began their advice with something on the best way to make new friends. Parents and teachers recognised these concerns too. For example, as noted in Table 7.1, Safeer's father remembered him starting at a new school, a mainly white school, when the family moved house:

He was very hesitant, very reluctant and I think the first few mont!.s were hard for him... They were not easy. Uh, he was feeling very lonesome, um, he was trying to build up friendship, but he's a tough child, so he, he's done well... Now, now he's, he's settled in, I think, much more."

Saad's class teacher recalled his admission to the Year 6 class shortly after he had arrived in this country from East Africa:

He plays with others in the playground but he does not have any particular friend. It's difficult because the class have been together for two years and have been with me for two years. So their friendship groups were already sorted and organised when he joined after Christmas. He gets on with children on the table where he sits but he does not really have particular friends.

Like a number of the children Saad was reported to have been unsettled and quarrelsome when he first started. He was often aggressive in the classroom. His teacher said:

Other children also complain of him pushing them and kicking them in the playground... He seems to have a low tolerance level. Half the time he's just playing. He's with someone, and he just taps them on the face, not meaning to hurt them. But other children react. We're very strict on play fighting here. He's got quite a temper and reacts straight away.

His teachers do not appear to have been aware that he was not only experiencing problems at school during this period. At the same time there were major problems at home. The family was seeking asylum. His mother reported that, when her children came to this country to join her, she did not have suitable accommodation for them. The landlord who had rented her a room gave her notice once she had children with her.

We went through a lot. I was crying a lot. They became upset... The Council couldn't help me at first because I didn't have documents for the children. We slept three of us on one bed, ate on the bed, everything.

Eventually the family was rehoused in short-term council accommodation and enjoyed some stability. Saad had a much longer journey to school but he settled better there, and there were fewer reports of his being involved in fighting. We noted that teachers in schools in the sample mentioned a range of strategies for inducting new pupils who are admitted after the beginning of a year. The approaches they adopted will be discussed in Chapter 9 where we will also consider the curriculum issues that arise when schools admit children whose previous education has been overseas.

7.3 Overview of findings

1. The majority of the children who had been at their school for a significant length of time were well integrated socially and enjoyed the same range of patterns of friendship within their peer group as would be expected of any other children. In addition, a minority had a small network of acquaintances from their own ethnic community either at school or based on their parents' network at home.

2. The children had to negotiate friendships across cultural and religious boundaries, usually without the support of others from the same background. This was most challenging when they were confronted with different values around the development of relations with the opposite sex during early adolescence.

3. A significant proportion of the children whom we interviewed had started their present school or their previous school at a different time from most other pupils. It seems likely that on average children from minority ethnic backgrounds in mainly white areas will have experienced more moves between schools than their peers. The reasons in our sample include arriving from another country as a refugee or asylum seeker, moving from the UK to another country and back again, and the family moving because of racist incidents in their neighbourhood or because of a change of job or a desire for better or cheaper accommodation.

4. In the accounts that these children gave of their own experiences of starting school, and in advice and fictional narratives on this topic from all the children it was evident that the social challenges in the situation worried most of them more than the challenges relating to school work. Concern about missing old friends and, in particular, ideas about how to develop new friendships or alliances featured at the top of the list of what they had to say about starting at a different school.

Chapter 7 Part 2 Racism and bullying at school

Summary

The research questions addressed in this section are:

- Do children from minority ethnic backgrounds experience race-related harassment and bullying in the schools, what measures are taken to protect them, and what level of confidence do they and their families have in what is done?

The principal findings reported here are:

- While very few of those we interviewed had been physically harassed in racist incidents, over a third of the children reported experiences of hurtful name calling and verbal abuse either at school or during the school journey. For around half of these the harassment was continuing or had continued over an extended period of time.

- Official procedures to reduce race-related bullying relied on children and parents to report any problems that occurred, but strong factors undermined their willingness or ability to do so. Consequently, in most of the schools some of the children and parents put little trust in the official reporting procedures, preferring to rely on their own resources, such as the protection of an older sibling.

7.4 Introduction

In independent reports in different areas of the country over an extended period researchers in the past have noted that white pupils in mainly white schools frequently express hostility and resentment towards minority ethnic people. They have also found that teachers tend to underestimate the amount and intensity of racist sentiment among their majority pupils. For example, Mould (1986) demonstrated both aspects of this pattern in a small-scale study in Tyneside. Heads, teachers and administrators generally expressed relaxed views on the degree of racism in the schools, yet 75% of a sample of 300 pupils expressed negative views of black people in essays that the researchers asked them to write on the subject. Akhtar and Stronach (1986) reported interviews with Asian pupils in Norwich and found that they had been subject to racist name calling but that teachers who were surveyed in the same study played this down. Further evidence along the same lines was reported by two advisers working for the Swann Committee who visited three schools in the north of England and three in the south (DES, 1985). A story completion task was used by Gaine (1995) to explore pupils' attitudes in schools in Cornwall and Hampshire with similar results.

There have been signs of an increase over time in the number of pupils arguing that principles of fair play, tolerance and equal rights should extend to minorities (Tomlinson, 1990, p. 171). But a more recent study in mainly white schools in Bedfordshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk has emphasised the continuing existence of the same pattern: "The extent and seriousness of racist incidents was underestimated by teachers and schools.

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There was a reluctance amongst victims of racial abuse to report incidents for fear of reprisal. Teachers tended to classify racist incidents along with other forms of teasing and bullying, rather than as racist incidents as such, and racist name calling was not taken seriously enough." (Hamilton et al, 1999, p. 6). With this background of evidence we thought it important to invite all our informants to comment on their experience in relation to race-related bullying at school and on the school's response to any incidents that had occurred.

Because the analysis of racism and bullying is a highly emotive topic, it is important to be clear and consistent in the use of language. In the course of this chapter we will use the phrase "physical harassment" to refer to a range of actions such as repeated spitting as well as assault. When that harassment appears to have a basis in perceived racial difference, we have tried to make that clear in the text. In the case of verbal bullying and harassment, e.g. through name calling, we have, again, tried to make clear whether or not (a) it was race-related and (b) it persisted over time (although in some cases our informants were not specific on this last point).

7.5 The children's experiences of race-related harassment and bullying

Some children and parents whom we interviewed had suffered racially motivated physical attacks in the areas where they lived, but this was rare. Only two pupils had been physically harassed in racist incidents at school or during the journey between school and home. We will illustrate this with the example of Ming-Chen, a Chinese boy, who, when we interviewed him, was in Year 9 of a comprehensive school in a suburban area not far from a socially depressed inner city district. Over an extended period in his first year in the school he had been subjected to repeated name calling on his way home. He gave examples of the names - *Chinky, check eyes, four eyes*. The name calling came to a head one day when Ming-Chen lost patience, and there was a fight on the family doorstep. His sisters took him back to school and reported the incident. The school dealt with the incident according their normal practice. In spite of this, and although the trouble died away for some months, the harassment then resumed:

> *He followed me home, spitting, standing in front of the house, shouting and jeering, spitting and stuff like this, and then he started being racist again...*

Ming-Chen believed that this happened because the boy had not been punished, and his family perceived that nothing effective had been done. Eventually the family wrote a letter to the school, and the worst of the behaviour stopped.

> *...he just does dirty looks, he doesn't say anything, but he still keeps giving me dirty looks.. he hangs around outside my house all the time, on the bike. Not shouting at me..*

There had been no recurrences of the racist incident after twelve months. However, separately there had been serious incidents of racist harassment at the takeaway restaurant that his father runs.

A much higher proportion, over a third of the children who were interviewed, reported experiences of hurtful name calling and verbal abuse either at school or during the school journey, and for around half of these the harassment was continuing or had continued over an extended period of time. They did not exaggerate the seriousness of the incidents that they described: even the least mature children in our sample discriminated between

non-malicious intent in name calling and teasing among friends and the malicious intent of those intending to emphasise exclusion and difference. The two examples given here come from children at the lower end of the age range of our sample. The first was provided by Michelle in Year 4. She said:

I: But supposing you were called a name connected with your skin, like "chocolate" they say don't they?

M: Well I don't mind, cos my friend says "I'd love to eat you cos you look like chocolate"

I: And why does it not bother you?

M: Cos she's my friend and she'd never do anything like that. And she doesn't say "You look like chocolate", she says "You look yummy".

I: So you think she's being kind.

Similarly Chay-Lyn in Year 3 said that she had not been called names at school for being Chinese *"except my friend, my best friend, and that was just for fun"*. However, most of the name calling *was* hurtful, and some children were reluctant to talk about it or even acknowledge it. Table 7.2 lists some of the race-related insults that had been directed at the children and illustrates their reactions. Other insults the children reported included "*big lips*" and "*Paki*" to two Black African girls, "*chocolate boy*" and "*that little browny boy*" to two Pakistani boys, and "*chimpanzee*" and "*Malteser*" to a mixed heritage child with a Black American mother and a White British father.

Other researchers have reported that children tend to be more concerned about racial insults than their teachers (Troyna and Hatcher, 1992; Osler, 2000). In our sample some teachers emphasised that the teasing was not always race-related, and some expressed the view that race was often simply a characteristic among many others that could be picked out by bullies almost randomly *"like being fat or having red hair"*. No children or parents saw these insults in the terms used by that teacher, although a minority of the children did report being teased for other things. For example, Maha who was in Year 7, had moved to her present school from Scotland. She was born in this country to parents who had come here from Pakistan and had grown up initially in Glasgow. She had been teased for her Scottish accent when she first moved to a primary school in the south of England. She said that she did *"mind a bit, but sometimes, they just, like, did it for fun"*. She said that she had not been teased for ethnic or religious reasons. For the children featured in Table 7.2 the experience was quite different.

Table 7.2 The experience of race-related insults and name calling

Srimad, a Year 8 boy from an Indian background, reported that he was called *"shit-boy"* almost daily. He would like to see those responsible put in detention. But, although he has told teachers, they have not done anything as far as he can see. *"They just say 'don't do it again'."*
Jamilah, a Year 8 girl from a Pakistani background, said that she had been called *"Paki"* once in Year 7. She told her form tutor, and the person received a detention. The problem has not recurred. The tutor recalled a more prolonged problem: *"From fairly early on in year 7 she was coming to me with one or two problems she'd had with children, quite spiteful. And they were saying things that some people would've just, I suppose, just let flow, but Jamilah is one of those people that just doesn't let anything go by without her questioning it, querying it or doing something about it. So there were race issues there, you know, people were calling her names and as a result, of course, she was getting a bit upset about that."*

Roopindar, a Year 7 boy from an Indian background, reluctantly reported intermittent racist teasing:
I: And have you ever been teased or...?
R: Mm once or twice, like but it hasn't like continued like. Just remarks and stuff. But it hasn't like been continued.
I: It was racist teasing was it?
R: Mm. No. Just like everyday things.
I: So have you ever been teased because of the colour of your skin or...
R: Sometimes yes, but not all the time.

Kamal's family has refugee status. They came here from Somalia, the two school age children moving only a month earlier to the school where we met him. Kamal (Year 4) is happy in the school, but his mother reported:
Mo: Some children call him names like macaroni hair. It is so horrible.
I: Here at Pine Lawns both children get called names.
Mo: Others call them other names. Two brothers who live near here. They say: 'Hey, Kamal, if you touch my son I will kill you.' (They do it) when they are with me.
I: So they threaten the boys even when you are there?
Mo: Yes.

Malcolm (Year 5) had sometimes been called names that did not directly relate to his racial origins, such as 'dickhead'. When children wanted to pick up on the fact that his mother was from Korea and his father from Britain, they would say *"Did they, when you were born, did they pull your eyes back on tape, so it stays like that?"*

Anoop (Year 5) said he had been bullied *"once or twice but I just ignore them and tell Mr W"*. Asked if he had been teased, he said: *"Yes, some. Two weeks ago in this school they called me Paki."* Later, when explaining the school's response, Anoop made a distinction between big and little incidents:
I: And do you think being teased and being called Paki is big or little?
A: I think it's big for Hindu, but it's different for English.

Harassment in school for Yusra (Year 5) included calling her abusive names, throwing water at her and minor stealing from her. She was particularly distressed by one of the few episodes reported to us that had an explicit religious focus. A boy told her that if she ate, she'd die. She believed him, and was disturbed for many days. It happened around the time of Ramadan. She stopped eating altogether for a while. When she told her mother about the problem, she in turn reported it to the class teacher and deputy head in the school. The latter promised to speak to the boy, but the family were given no feedback, nor were they asked if it had cleared up.

7.6 The school context

Persistent racist verbal abuse was reported more often in some schools than others. The size of the sample precluded a systematic analysis of factors differentiating the schools, but we were able to identify some relevant characteristics that would be worth further investigation in research that is conducted on a larger scale. Factors relating to school management and teachers' handling of race-related incidents are discussed below. An observation that extends beyond the schools themselves is that the reporting of racist verbal abuse appeared to follow a different pattern in schools in areas of high stress compared to schools in areas of relative prosperity and calm. Fewer children attending schools with largely affluent catchment areas reported persistent problems. A Muslim teacher in one such school suggested that this might be because there were so few minority ethnic families in the area that there was nothing supporting different cultures, no minority shops or places of worship, etc. Thus the minority ethnic families who were there were almost "invisible" and were not experienced as a threat.

In another school where few pupils in our sample reported racial harassment the head teacher said that he felt there was *"a degree of racism albeit under the surface"*. The majority of pupils had very little experience of mixing with ethnic minorities. The area in which the school was situated was almost exclusively white middle class, so that there was very little opportunity for white and minority ethnic pupils to interact outside of school. The head noted that the most recent incidents of racism that they had had to deal with, some of which were serious, were associated more with anti-European feelings. Those on the receiving end of a racial attack had been exchange students from Germany and France.

The only school where more than half the children reported persistent racial abuse had a settled working class catchment area, a recent increase in the number of immigrants settling in the area, and an active local British National Party branch. When we calculated the proportion of children reporting persistent problems in each school and placed the schools in rank order on this measure, the top three schools all had partly or wholly working class catchment areas and a record of recent racist political activity in the district. Four of the six schools that were lowest in the list had more prosperous catchment areas and no such record. There were two primary schools at the lower end of the list with *less* prosperous catchment areas. It is possible that an important factor in their exceptional record was the way in which key teachers in these schools responded to race-related bullying and name-calling. We now turn to school policies on the issue, and to teachers' practices.

All the schools had written policies on bullying and established procedures for handling complaints about it. Some schools also had statements of policy on equal opportunities. A minority of these policies explicitly covered racial harassment and teasing, and only one school had a formal procedure in place for recording racist incidents separately and reviewing them over time. In general, staff indicated that they would expect to deal with such incidents within the framework of the school's policy on bullying. For example, one primary school's Behaviour Policy included among its aims - to "produce an environment in which children feel safe and secure, which is free from harassment and promotes positive attitudes to gender equality, cultural diversity and special needs of all kinds". The first item in a list of forms of "unacceptable behaviour" is "bad language, including racist remarks". There is a specific procedure for dealing with racist remarks which includes three elements:

- child reprimanded and record of incident kept
- victim supported
- repeat offence, parents informed.

The head teacher commented:

> *"...all the children are treated the same and I think the fact that they are ethnic minorities doesn't make any difference for me because the children all integrate and mix in. The only thing that I will say is that in our behaviour policy, we have got set criteria for anything that's reported... We have a playground book and any children with unacceptable behaviour, such as bad language, including racist remarks, deliberately hurting people, unacceptable behaviour and if that happens, then their names go in the book. I work out the detail. I then see those children. So, I can monitor what's going on. So any bullying, whether it is racist or not and any*

way that people are mistreated, it is dealt with. So, obviously, the awareness is there, but it doesn't become a big issue, really.

I: It's integrated into the school policy in dealing with difficult behaviour for all the children.

T: Yes... And if a child was bullied, you would actually support the victim ..whatever, really. And I would say that because we come down hard early on as long as we know about it before it actually develops and I'm not aware of any racist bullying at all. You sometimes get name-calling."

Table 7.3 focuses on what is done when a complaint is made and contrasts two secondary schools with formal and informal procedures. We noted that the detailed and formal procedures described in some of the statements appeared to be based on requirements placed by the LEA for the area on all schools. As would be expected, explicit statements and procedures of this kind tend to be developed when there is strong central encouragement and support for that to happen.

Table 7.3 Formal and informal procedures for dealing with complaints of race-related harassment

School with informal/loosely defined procedures	School with formal/detailed procedures
One secondary school had a high profile anti-bullying policy, which almost all the children we interviewed mentioned. The deputy head said that there had been a lot of bullying before it was introduced five years earlier and that the policy had helped to reduce it with only 3 - 4% of children now reporting in surveys that they had been bullied compared to 20 - 25% previously. He said that, while the policy statement does not specifically refer to *"a racial name-calling", "a religious name-calling", or whatever, when that does happen, we do make a note of, it so that we can try and identify through the Heads of Year where there have been significant problems.* *I: Right.* *T: ..and therefore we do deal with those on a personal basis through, through, uh, mediation, through discussion with the students."* There were no figures available for the number or proportion of incidents with a racist element.	In another secondary school the policy requires that a formal record is made in a Racist Incident Log of any racist incidents that are reported. The Log was begun in 1999 and had nine incidents recorded at the time of the research visit. They are dealt with usually by a head of year, unless more than one year group is involved, when it may be the Coordinator for Years 7 - 9. These teachers report to the pastoral deputy who holds the log as part of her overall responsibility in respect of antiracism. The procedure involves: • interviews with both pupils & witnesses to ascertain what happened as well as possible; • information to both sets of parents who have to be kept informed; • advice and counselling to either or both parties as seems possible; • other action, e.g. punishment of perpetrator (ranging from detention to exclusion) and informing other agencies; • a careful log of each step. One head of year defined a racist incident as any incident where the victim, the bully or a witness thinks it has a racist element. In the Anti-bullying Guide, a copy of which is sent to all parents, racially and/or sexually offensive remarks and/or behaviour are listed as behaviour that counts as bullying. The Guide also states that bullying behaviour will not be dismissed as teasing, natural competition or bossiness. The guide to whether bullying has occurred was to be how the victim felt.

The Government's response to the Macpherson Report may create a framework within which general improvements can be achieved. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 had required head teachers to draw up procedures to prevent bullying among pupils and to bring these procedures to the attention of staff, parents and pupils. Guidance issued

after the Macpherson Report offered more detailed advice specifically on race-related bullying (DfEE, 2000). It was intended that Ofsted would monitor the implementation of race equality initiatives within schools, including the development of strategies to tackle racial harassment and measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour (Osler and Morrison, 2000). In this context there are limits to what the development of written school policies can achieve. Teachers may not follow the approved procedures; parents, children and sometimes even teachers may not be properly informed about what their school's policy requires; the parents of perpetrators may condone their children's behaviour; and, most commonly, children may be reluctant to trigger the procedure because they do not wish to tell a teacher about what has happened to them. These problems are illustrated later together with comments from staff who have tried to address them.

In both schools the pupils and parents whom we interviewed generally supported the approach that was taken. For example, in the school with the more formal procedure Samuel once reported to a teacher that another boy had called him "chimpanzee" and "Malteser". The perpetrator was given a warning and stopped doing it after that. However, there were problems. In five of the six families there were reports of racist incidents of some kind at school or on the journey to school either to an interviewed child or to a sibling. Only half of the children who reported such incidents to the researcher had reported them to teachers. The rate of non-reporting is of crucial significance when schools' strategies rely on teachers being informed. This is discussed in some detail below.

Some simple and relatively informal strategies, such as the private "Bullying Box" in one primary school, were widely seen to be effective. A class teacher explained:

> *"The bullying policy is right the way through the whole school. It is just not on. It is not accepted in any form. Um, there's a bullying box in the corridor there. If someone doesn't want to come out and say it, then they can pop it into the box. Um, and then of course we can sort it out. They are told when they come into the school that if anything happens to them, then they can talk to us... The Head is very strict."*

Mohini, who had moved to the area only a month earlier and started in Year 3, went home crying quite often because one particular girl was nasty to her. It was not possible for her mother to be sure that there was a racial basis to the problem. She had assessed the other girl's mother when they all came to collect their children and decided that she would be unsympathetic if she approached her about it. The bullying box offered a less threatening option:

> *Mo: I don't know if she was not liking her because of the different race. I don't know. I don't know if it's because of being different looking or different type....I don't know if it's her parents saying, "oh, these Asians are not good." I don't know. It could be that at home she hears, "don't mix with Asians"...it's difficult to analyse why she has been doing that... So if it goes on for a longer time, I'll just write a little note and put it in the bullying box... It's a good idea. It means not going to the teacher because they are all so busy, you know. I don't want to go to them because, maybe I'm wrong. Maybe she just doesn't like her as a girl. Maybe she has been nasty sometimes. Maybe she is not one hundred percent perfect...I don't know what has started this quarrel or whatever."*

The teachers all stressed that it was important that there was a very quick response to notes that were placed in the box. The head laid some emphasis on her responsibility to follow up on what was done and inform the complainant what was happening.

A different strategy was adopted in one of the schools mentioned above where no children reported persistent race-related name-calling although the area had adverse factors supporting racism. The school's Discipline Policy provides the framework for what is done. It has a list of "Expectations in School" which include:

- *Bullying will be sorted out quickly.*
- *Racist comments will be stopped.*

The statement on bullying explains:

> *The law states that heads have a duty to take firm action to deal with reported instances of physical or verbal bullying. Bullying affects bullies, victims and witnesses, causing distress and souring the climate of a school. Bullying can include name-calling, isolating, teasing, jostling, punching, intimidation, extortion and assault. It is difficult to recognise bullies in that they do not conform to a stereotype. Victims are often those who are vulnerable because they become easily agitated. Ethnic minority groups are at risk, via racist abuse.*

There is a separate statement in the Discipline Policy on anti-racism:

> *We oppose any form of racism. This could be:*
>
> - *Use of the school premises by outsiders (e.g. lettings) to further any racist organisation.*
> - *Physical or verbal abuse against a person because of colour or ethnic origin.*
> - *Derogatory name-calling, insults or racist jokes.*
> - *Racist comments during lessons.*
>
> *Incidents will be taken seriously and dealt with as for bullying. Firm explanations will always be given. If necessary, parents will be informed. Remember that everyone deserves a warning first. If a problem persists, parents (and possibly governors) must be involved. The school's attitude will be explained, and pupils will be encouraged to express their own concerns and feelings.*

A key element in the range of responses that the school makes to problems is a "Thinking Sheet". Staff considered that this had been of particular value in cases of racist behaviour. The heading on these single A4 sheets explains that they are given to *"children who have ignored a warning or done something really serious. We think that parents should be told."* A staff member briefly outlines the reason for having the sheet completed, the pupils writes a short section on *"Why I was wrong"*, and then parents are asked to sign that they have seen it. The extent of the challenge that the school faced may be illustrated by the head's observation that:

> *On a number of occasions we've had parents - we send this Thinking Sheet home, then the parent has to sign to say they've seen it - they don't have to do anything - they just have to acknowledge that they've seen that their child has done something we're not happy about, but I must say that on 50% of occasions when we've sent home instances of inappropriate behaviour towards ethnic minorities, we've had notes back saying 'I don't think he's done anything wrong'.*

Nonetheless the head's determination on the issue was recognised by parents and children as well as teachers, and the school's discipline system was generally seen to be effective. For example, Kirsty (Year 6) said that she had never been teased or bullied. *"Mr H doesn't allow bullying in this school."* Michelle (Year 3) had been told to go to the Brownies because she was brown. She went to her teacher about it, and *"she told the boy off and he didn't do it again"*. Michelle was clear that, if there were something serious, she could deal with it *"or Mr H will deal with it"*.

The other school with some adverse features in the environment and no children reporting persistent problems of racial name-calling was also a primary school, this time a voluntary aided school with a religious foundation. Here, too, the head teacher's personal leadership appeared to be a key factor in reducing the expression of racist views. A Year 4 class teacher related this to the ethos of the school:

> *We have a very strict stance on it. We talk to children about the rights and responsibilities. We do reinforce that they've got responsibilities in the school, one of those is the way that they treat other people and that it's not acceptable. That's interesting because Jane (the head) has been doing that at lunch time today, verbal bullying that's going on. She's had the child and the parents in and we try to support the victim as much as possible with that. We have quite a strong sense because it comes back again to the ethos of the school. If we let those things go on, then we are not really living the Christian life that we want to in the school and we do see that as important.*

Terry (Year 6) had come to the school a year earlier. He thought it was definitely better than his last school.

> *I: What was wrong with your last school?*
> *T: They were racist to me...*
> *I: What makes this school different?*
> *T: They're nicer to me; they treat me differently from the other school.*
> *I: Is it the children or the staff that treat you nicer?*
> *T: Both really.*
> *I: What sort of things were they doing in the other school?*
> *T: In year 1, they were calling me names and bullying me. That's why I moved.*

A Year 3 class teacher said:

> *Basically bullying in this school isn't tolerated at all. If anything happened the head along with the teacher would address the whole class or take a group away until it's sorted out. They focus on the children trying to solve the problems themselves. They try to put ideas of what's wrong with a situation and ask how they are going to make it better.*

The head and most of the teachers we interviewed emphasised that addressing major problems when they arise is only one element of what is needed. In parallel with that there has to be work going on routinely in the classroom that addresses the attitudes underlying racial name calling. Table 7.4 presents some examples of such work from this and other schools that were described to us in the context of work on racism. Curriculum issues are discussed further in the next chapter.

Table 7.4 Classroom work on racism and bullying
A Year 4 class teacher talked of working on bullying and name calling as part of PHSE: *We make up our own rules. We have our own code of conduct in the classrooms. Our children are involved in that, and they need to understand that it's not acceptable because they could tell you what's right and what's wrong. One of the priorities is name calling and bullying and being teased. We don't have that in our classroom. Whenever there's issues like that, we deal with it straight away.*
A Year 6 teacher highlighted the value of Circle Time in this context. *I: If he were to be more a loner, is there anything that you would feel you want to do in order to ...?* *T: Well, I think that as with any colour or any nationality or any race, I would talk to the class and encourage them to treat everyone well. I have had things in the past, but that has been "The Step". There is a step, so that if anybody feels lonely, they can actually stand on the step and so others can see that person and can say, do you want to come and play? And that's for anybody. And we have Circle Time. So that if there is any problem at all...discipline or whatever, and so we have Circle Time and get it all ironed out ... And so any problem like racism, that would be talked about and put to right. But we have had very little racist comments or racist bad behaviour.*
A Year 4 class teacher said: *I've never known anybody say anything to Paul, never heard it, perhaps he's said something different to you? There was one time when he was in year 2, we were doing self portraits in pastels, his black skin was mentioned and it was more of a comparison really between the different colours of skins.* *I: How was that dealt with?* *T: Really well. Another boy, his grandad must be Chinese or something, we looked at his skin and he has got a bit of a yellowish tinge. We looked at the different colours of our skins and mine has a bluish, blotchy look about it and we just compared skin tones and had a bit of a laugh about it really. Paul, when he was in year 2 was a happier child than he is now. He was fine about it.*
Savarna's Year 4 teacher said that she had reported: *"...other children making comments about her skin, and I think from the other children there is a racism from home, where they will come out & say things. But she'll come & say straight away. She knows that it's wrong. And then as a class we explore making personal comments about people and racism & sexism – the whole issue. Because I'd rather be up front about it. I'd rather say why it's wrong to make comments about Savarna's skin. It is really skin not religion."*
Naseema, Year 8, who had experienced some unpleasant teasing in infants school but not since, thought that there would not be problems in her secondary school: *I think, in this school, racism doesn't happen, 'cause there aren't that many Asian children. Um, also, in P.S.E lessons and Personal Development, they teach you about treating people individually.*
Jabal's class teacher in Year 4 was aware that there had been a problem of name calling in Year 3 and that it had been dealt with. *I didn't want it starting up in Year 4. Because I was told from the previous teacher, I knew what had happened because I worked with him last year. And I thought, well, I don't want it happening this year. So, I'll nip it in the bud ... As soon as there was an incident, I brought it right out into the open. Um, "three of you are picking on Jabal. I know it happened last year. I do not want it happening ... I will not have this sort of behaviour". And we were doing an RE topic anyway, so we talked about why he is of another religion, you know, how we should understand them and how we should respect other people's ideas because it was all part of our class work and it fitted in nicely. And general things on name calling and things like that. And they've been in class, name calling each other anyway. So, I made it a general thing. I generally let them know that in my class, this does not happen... It will not be tolerated by me or the head.*

7.7 The implementation of school policies

With some variation in approach all the schools had a strategy in place for reducing race-related bullying that relied on teachers being informed of it when it happened. But it commonly took the form of name-calling during breaks, lunchtime and journeys between home and school when close supervision was difficult or impossible. Some teachers expressed the view that many problems might go unreported. For example, a secondary head talked about *"a degree of racism albeit under the surface"*, a head of department commented that, *"when your back's turned, you don't know what's going on in different parts of the playground"*, and a primary class teacher said: *"It's been happening out of ear shot... You don't know, do you?"* But there were more examples of teachers believing that children would confide in them when evidence from the children or parents suggested the opposite. For example, Mohini, who was quoted above, had recently joined Year 3 moving mid-year from another school. She told the researcher that she had not had problems with being called nasty names. Her teacher confirmed that.

> *I: And she hasn't had any problems concerning bullying or to do with her skin colour or ethnicity or anything?*
>
> *T: No. I don't think so. When we had our little chat and I just said to her like I'd say to any other child: "If anything at all upsets you or if you have a problem or you're worried about anything, come and talk to me and talk to Mrs. D, and we'll always want to help". And I say that to all the children. And um she often comes and has little chats and tells me what she has been doing and by doing that I know ...I know that if she has got a problem, then she will come to me.*

But her mother reported that in fact she had had serious problems. One girl had broken up her friendships with others in the class and teased her about having hairy legs. She would cry at home, and started wearing trousers to school. At one stage she did not want to go to school at all. At the time of our visit the problem had not been resolved; the child avoided talking about it to anyone except her mother, and the teacher remained entirely unaware what was happening. Her mother was postponing taking the matter further.

> *I say: "Speak to a teacher if you feel that it is too much to cope with. Tell her that she has been doing this and if she wants me to I can meet her and if it goes beyond that, I can go to the head teacher and tell her that this is going on." I just don't want to create a fuss over this... I don't want to complain if they can sort it out themselves.*

What factors undermine the willingness or ability of some children and parents to report problems that occurred? They gave many reasons for not reporting racist bullying, and even more for not reporting teasing or ostracism. Their reasoning is illustrated in Table 7.5 on the next page.

For a small number of victims there was a further difficulty. Those who were confused about their own ethnic identity, those who had learning difficulties and those who were new immigrants were sometimes uncertain in their assessment of what had happened. They might, for example, feel unsure whether non-verbal or indirect teasing was intended seriously, and they might still be learning the local conventions of what constitutes acceptable, sociable teasing. Thus, when she was very new in the country, Sachi, the Japanese girl who was quoted in the table above, had to react to a boy putting a wrapper in her bag but could not tell if he was just having fun with her or intending to put her

down. Similarly, Samuel, a Year 8 boy with language difficulties, struggled with the concept of sarcasm as he tried to explain to the interviewer that a boy who had insulted him and then said, "I'm only joking", was really being serious and malicious. Such confusion seems to have led to long delays in reporting in some instances.

Table 7.5
The most common reasons that children and parents gave for not reporting racist bullying, teasing, etc.

1. Key teachers are not really concerned.

Ming-Chen (Year 9), who was badly taunted, followed home and spat at, was asked whether he told his form tutor:
I: You didn't tell your form teacher or anybody?
M: Well, my form teacher then, he wasn't horrible or anything but he wasn't really bothered. And I find that these teachers in this school ignore, they know what's happening but they ignore things that happen here. Not all the teachers, not the teachers like Mr L. But I find that the teachers want to ignore it.
I: Do you?
M: They know what's happened, but they just ignore it, so maybe they're not bothered, I don't know.

2. Teachers want to help but cannot take effective action because they are unable to make hostile white pupils desist from troubling others.

When asked what she was supposed to do if there were racist teasing, Sachi (Year 7) said:
S: First I would tell mum, parents, to sort this out, and tell teachers, but they might not really (silence)
I: Understand?
S: Tell them to stop. But if teachers tell them to stop they won't stop because some doesn't listen to teachers.

Jabal (Year 4) talked about the boy who called him names like "little browny boy":
He's really angry. Sometimes he don't listen to the teacher or don't listen to no-one else. He just bullies and beats someone else up. He just walks over and says I'm going to beat you up and once he used to have his hair all like orange and...

3. A complaint might make matters worse.

Peter explained that he had been called names in his previous school but had not done anything about it:
I: You didn't really want to talk to them about it at home?
P: No.
I: I, I'm not sure why someone would keep it to themselves, why they wouldn't want to talk about it at home.
P: Well, because sometimes you think they might do something to you if you tell your mum and dad or you tell the school and you think that people will start bullying you even worse.
I: Right. So it doesn't really work to tell your mum and dad or to tell the teachers?
P: No.

Ruth, a Chinese girl in Year 5, told a story about a girl being bullied. The girl in her story told her mother about it, but not her teacher.
I: So, why didn't she tell the teacher?
R: She just didn't like telling other people very much.
I: Yeah. Do you think she was afraid or something if she did tell the teacher?
R: She thought that the boy would beat her up even more. Because that's what bullies do, really, don't they?

A further reason for not informing teachers was that to do so meant acknowledging openly to oneself and to others that one has been hurt. Especially in the case of racial abuse, that appears to have been experienced by some of the children as a further humiliation. Ming-Chen, who was quoted above, explained that it was another thing that highlighted what set him apart:

M: ...they (teacher.) emphasise that I should tell th But it's very difficult to talk about it.

I: Becau: .'

M: Beci use it's hard to admit that you've been bullied.

I: Why do you say "admit" it?

M: It's not my fault, but it's not something that happens to everyone is it?

I: So it's more of being different.

M: Yes.

It is important to emphasise that these voices were rare within the sample. Most of the children replied to these questions in terms that echoed the teachers' message. If they were to have a problem over bullying or name calling, they thought that they would inform a teacher and they expected firm action as a result. Nonetheless, of the 23 children who had experienced some verbal abuse more than half (13) reported that it had persisted over a period of time. Minority ethnic children were physically safe in the schools, but the policies and measures against racism there were not effective in preventing verbal abuse.

Moreover, it was not only children who lacked confidence in or could not use the systems that were in place. Some parents also were unsure that the staff could put a stop to problems of bullying, teasing or ostracism. For that reason they had delayed, or thought they might delay, seeking help for their child. This was a feature of the situations facing Ming-Chen and Mohini whose stories were told earlier. In a different area Luke's mother said that he had had no problems. However, his older brother, Courtney, had been intimidated by name calling when at the top of the primary school and had wanted to be driven to school to avoid it.

Mo: Yeah. Just name calling and...

I: To do with his skin colour?

Mo: Yeah. Yeah. Um and he's not sort of quick enough off the mark to give them an answer. And he doesn't always tell me what they've said...

I: So what did the school do?

Mo: Not a lot. Not a lot. Um...

I: What would you have liked them to have done?

Mo: Um ...because it wasn't anything ...you couldn't have said that person has done this and we'll know for a fact ...it's just a general sort of not very nice atmosphere with his particular group.

I: Is there anything that the school could have done to have dealt with it better?

Mo: Probably. I don't know. I really ..I don't know because it wasn't actually physical.

I: But that in itself can be really quite a horrible experience.

Mo: Yeah, sometimes I wish there had been a sort of punch up or something because I think if he'd have got really angry or as angry as he used to be upset, you know to that level, he would have... you know and that would have been it.

Things had improved later in the year, but up to that point she had faced a quandary as to how to help. She knew he was suffering but did not feel that name calling was enough of an issue to make a fuss about.

Some parents expressed the feeling that they were walking a tightrope. This can be illustrated further with the example of Dechen (Year 4). His teacher thought there was no evidence of any racial bullying, and he himself said that the names he was called were *"bad language ones"* that are not to do with skin colour. But he was also sometimes left out when they were all playing in the playground. His father proceeded uncertainly:

Every now and then... I don't want to make an issue out of it, but every now and then, I do ask, do they call you names or anything like that? He says no.

This caution may be seen as an expression of Mr W's general approach to issues of race.

I think if you went out and looked for things, you could always find things from a racial point of view. I don't have that problem. I mean we do get looks from parents and that, but I just ignore it. I would only react if it becomes blatant. But other than that, I can just let it go over my head. So if you try to look at it that way, it doesn't bother you that much. Because wherever you will go, that problem will always occur. Unless somebody knows who I am, they will always judge me by my colour or where I come from. That is a common factor that you just have to live with. So, it hasn't been a problem for Dechen."

For some parents and siblings these calls for help from younger members of the family had the effect of re-emphasising their own impotence. Children would sometimes sense this and keep things to themselves, being "brave" as one Year 8 girl put it. It was evident that Savarna's father knew nothing of the racist remarks that she was the target of in Year 4. There were some indications that the serious problems that Ming-Chen experienced got worse partly because the situation was allowed to fester.

We noted that earlier investigators of minority ethnic pupils in mainly white schools have commented on the same issue. In Norwich, Akhtar and Stronach (1986) reported that "*Asian parents were sometimes keen to collude with teachers and play down the racist implications of name calling*". Tomlinson (1990) found that some of the staff on Education Support Grant projects whose work she reviewed had made the same observation. For example, "*the ESG project worker in Cumbria began to collect evidence of racist behaviour where parents of victims preferred to ignore or minimise the incident to avoid further harassment*" (p. 69).

For many of the children in our sample, however, family members were the ultimate defence in which they could have confidence. Spencer (Year 6) said that, if he were called names, he would prefer to tell his father rather than the teachers.

I: Why would you rather tell your dad than the teachers?

S: Because my dad sorts it out more. They listen to my dad more. They ignore the teachers, because the people that mostly do it are cheeky to the teachers.

Naseema (Year 8) who had been bullied at infants' school recalled how her brother had had a firm talk with the perpetrator some time later when he found out about it, so that

there had never been a recurrence. Some parents talked to their children about racism (in both abstract and concrete terms) in order to prepare them and offer advice on how to deal with it. Their aim usually was to build up their confidence so that they would be able to handle it.

However, the task will never be easy for minority ethnic parents or committed teachers. In one school the head took a stand against extreme racist attitudes among parents on the nearest local estate. He noted that children had been withdrawn as a consequence. A supply teacher acknowledged these efforts but also identified an insular viewpoint in the staff room that could undermine much of what he was trying to achieve:

T: I don't think the ethnic minority children get racist comments, it's just not catered for their needs in that respect - it's just like they weren't here, or that part of their identity isn't catered for.

I: Have you felt uncomfortable re staff attitudes? Do you feel there's prejudice, if not racism?

T: From the staff to ethnic minority children, I haven't heard anything. From the cleaning ladies yes, not against ethnic minority children but they're against Scots. About ethnic minorities I haven't heard anything from staff. There are staff here who don't travel, and I think there's an ignorance about other countries, but I've never heard anything against children. I've had some things about me being German - meant to be funny, but I don't find it very funny. I asked if (some controversial children's) books are banned in school and I got the answer: "We're not Nazis, we don't burn books." There are things like that. I think those sort of things are very rude. They weren't meant to hurt, but they're very unpleasant.

I: So on the surface, as you say, ethnic minorities don't exist here, but you think that covers various levels of prejudice.

T: I think it is prejudice - there's no interest. Mrs L. thinks the same. I think she's from India.

In the next chapter we will examine the ways in which cultural diversity is addressed in the curriculum and consider the views of others who reported that, while minority ethnic children were not usually treated badly in school, they were treated as if they were white. A recently appointed head teacher linked the two issues:

I: What do you see as key policy issues for the school with a very small ethnic minority presence?

T: That's personal isn't it, because I see it as the fact that those children don't see themselves as Black in our school. It's an identity thing. This is criticising our school in a way that I...as I say I've come in as a new head. Our staff aren't aware...you've talked to me and I don't know for sure about one boy's actual background. Should I not know that... as I'm talking? And to an extent ...you can't know everything so I should stop slashing myself about. I don't think that it's at the forefront as much as it could be to make our children feel fully integrated. I was wondering, well it's making me wonder is there something missing? But I'm sure we do things right because Terry's mother is, because Terry is happy at our school, and he hasn't had racist bullying in the way that he had at his previous school... So... What are the key issues? They are, are we addressing, are we doing the best we can for our ethnic minorities?

7.8 Overview of findings

1. A small minority of the families had suffered racially motivated physical attacks in the areas where they lived, and two pupils had been physically harassed in racist incidents either at school or during the journey between school and home. A much higher proportion, over a third of the children who were interviewed, reported experiences of hurtful name calling and verbal abuse either at school or during the school journey, and for around half of these the harassment was continuing or had continued over an extended period of time. They did not exaggerate the seriousness of the incidents that they described: even the least mature children in our sample discriminated between non-malicious intent in name calling and teasing among friends and the malicious intent of those intending to emphasise exclusion and difference.

2. Our sample included schools in areas of high stress and areas of comparative prosperity and calm. The former group of schools faced greater difficulties in containing aggressive behaviour, and the children we interviewed appeared to be more likely to report persistent problems of racial harassment in schools in working class areas and in schools where the staff or parents reported racist political activity in the neighbourhood.

3. All the schools had written policies on bullying and established procedures for handling complaints about it. Some schools also had statements of policy on equal opportunities. Only a small minority of these policies explicitly covered racial harassment and teasing, and only one school had a formal procedure in place for recording racist incidents separately and reviewing them over time. In general, staff indicated that they would expect to deal with such incidents within the framework of the school's policy on bullying.

4. In all the schools staff indicated that they expected problems of racial harassment to be reported to them and had agreed strategies for responding when that happened. There was a consensus about some aspects of good practice - investigating the incident fairly, making sure that perpetrators understood what they had done wrong and informing parents when children were involved in persistent or malicious abuse. There was resistance from white parents in some areas, but a number of teachers emphasised that it was known among pupils that racist behaviour would be taken very seriously in the school and, especially at secondary level, that severe sanctions could be taken against perpetrators. Examples of good practice included:

   - strategies for making it easy to report problems such as an anonymous "Bullying Box" where children could post messages that would receive staff attention within 24 hours;
   - strategies for encouraging individuals to reflect on incidents such as "Thinking Sheets" which had to be seen and signed by parents and included a section for the child to write about why what they had done had been wrong;
   - strategies for encouraging groups to reflect on incidents such as "Circle Time";
   - maintaining a permanent school record of serious incidents of bullying or racial harassment (e.g. a "Racist Incident Book") so as to facilitate common approaches to victims and perpetrators by different members of staff and lay the basis for a systematic quality review of procedures.

5. Reducing the incidence of race-related bullying posed a very considerable challenge to the schools. Its most common expression was through name-calling during breaks, lunchtime and journeys between home and school when close supervision was difficult or impossible. The official procedures relied on children and parents to report any problems that occurred, but strong factors undermined their willingness or ability to do so. The children and parents gave many reasons for not reporting racist bullying, and even more for not reporting teasing or ostracism. In a very few cases a child did not feel confident that key teachers were really concerned. More often children lacked confidence in teachers' power to take effective action, believing that they would not be able to make hostile white pupils desist from troubling others. In some settings they feared that a complaint might even make matters worse. Another factor making it more likely that problems would not be reported was that victims, especially those who were confused about their own ethnic identity, those who had learning difficulties and those who were new immigrants, sometimes had difficulty in assessing what had happened. They might, for example, feel uncertain whether non-verbal or indirect teasing was malicious in intent, and they might still be learning the local conventions of what constitutes acceptable, sociable teasing. This led to long delays in reporting in some instances.

   Some parents also lacked confidence in staff commitment or, more often, power to be effective against bullying, teasing or ostracism and so might delay seeking help for their child. Parents or other members of the family might also have their own motives for not wanting to acknowledge the existence of local hostility to their presence or not wanting the family to acquire a higher profile in the school or the community. Some children sensed their parents' vulnerability, and, knowing that they would be very unhappy if they were aware that their child was being teased or ostracised, protected them from that knowledge. Finally, on occasions, there was a different kind of internal pressure against telling: "admitting" that one is being bullied may itself feel like a further humiliation, especially in the case of racial abuse.

6. Thus in most of the schools some of the children and parents put little trust in the official reporting procedures. They often preferred to rely on their own resources, e.g. the protection of an older sibling or direct communication with perpetrators' parents. A small minority of primary schools had won the confidence of all those we interviewed, usually on the basis that the head teacher personally was seen to deal with such matters firmly and to provide a lead for others on the issue. That confidence was enhanced when care was taken to inform victims and their parents of the outcome of any follow-up to a report of racist behaviour. We noted, however, that few of the staff mentioned the need for this, while a number of the parents and older children expressed concern about it and appreciation when it was done.

7. Many of the parents placed some emphasis on preparing their children for the need to handle expressions of racism at some point in school or outside. In addition, the children themselves had developed their own preferred strategies. Those who could call on siblings or friends at school for support had felt themselves to be at a considerable advantage, while those who suppressed or ignored the problem rarely expressed satisfaction with the long term outcome.

8. It was very rare indeed for children or parents to suggest that teachers' actions might be motivated directly by racism or to impugn their general fairness. At the same time it was recognised by many teachers as well as by parents and older children that minority ethnic children may often face covert or institutional racism. It appeared that in the schools in this sample this most commonly took the form of an indifference to or ignorance of what was distinctive about the experience of pupils from ethnic and religious minorities outside and inside school. This issue has been discussed above in connection with the development of a sense of one's own identity and will be discussed further below in relation to the curriculum. Ensuring the safety and security of all pupils is a necessary condition for enhancing educational achievement, but it is not sufficient.

Chapter 8 Curriculum Issues

Summary

The research questions addressed in this section are:

- How do teachers in the schools view the education of children and young people from minority ethnic groups?
- To what extent do curricula, school ethos and classroom practices reflect the diversity of society as a whole and meet the needs and interests of all children in the schools, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those recently arrived from overseas?

The principal findings reported here are:

- No school in this sample had a fully developed strategy for preparing pupils through the curriculum for life in a diverse society. Presented with alternative ideals of how diversity might be treated, most informants saw their school or class as trying to treat all children equally and playing down ethnic and cultural differences. A minority of schools or classrooms in this sample was seen as partially adopting the alternative stance of stressing and valuing cultural diversity.
- The teachers we interviewed did not see any recent development at national level as encouraging a focus on this area of work. Moreover, until very recently Ofsted inspections of the schools did not appear to have stimulated thinking on how the curriculum might address diversity to that end. This issue had been addressed during the most recent school inspections and is now a theme in the National Curriculum programmes of study in Citizenship .

8.1 Introduction

When the National Curriculum was introduced, one of the assumptions behind work on cross-curricular elements was that "*preparation for life in a multicultural society is relevant to all pupils*" (NCC, 1990, p.2). The recognition that this was needed was not new. A DES reply to a Select Committee Report nearly 20 years earlier had stated the same principle. All pupils and not just pupils attending schools in multi ethnic areas, should "*be enabled to acquire a greater knowledge and appreciation of the cultural traditions of the countries of emigration as well as of this country, and to develop rational attitudes to race and colour*" (DES, 1974, para 9). Curriculum guidance some years later took it as axiomatic that "*our society has become multicultural*" (DES, 1981, p. 21). In a national survey during that period, Little and Willey (1981) found that:

> *Some 25 per cent of schools with a 'low' concentration of minority ethnic groups reported that some of their teaching reflected a multi-ethnic society. In most cases Heads cited religious studies as the area of the curriculum where this was covered. Very few schools reported that they had systematically considered the implications of a multi-ethnic society for their curriculum as a whole. A small number of schools said that they considered that they should be doing more but were uncertain about what action to take - 'in our situation it is very difficult to give a problem like this the time and attention it rightly deserves - at least we are conscious of this'. (p. 29)*

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Almost ten years later Tomlinson (1990) investigated the use of Education Support Grants for curriculum development in mainly white areas and was able to chart some progress in response to that initiative:

> *An analysis of a sample of these projects suggested that project aims of raising awareness of the multicultural nature of society, challenging racism and promoting principles of justice and equality in all areas, were slowly being realised and the projects were acting as catalysts and agents for change in white areas. The projects were able to support those teachers and others who genuinely wished to change their practices and attitudes, and the attitudes and beliefs of their pupils. They were having clear and positive effects on teachers, pupils, parents and others in areas where education for an ethnically diverse society had previously been considered unnecessary, if it was considered at all. The ESG project work ran parallel to the efforts of other teachers and educationalists concerned to make appropriate changes in 'subject knowledge', and to the values underlying this knowledge that might help to decrease white pupils' levels of misinformation, ignorance, intolerance and attitudes of white superiority. (pp. 170 - 171)*

When the National Curriculum was introduced at that time, those concerned with education for cultural diversity expressed anxiety about its impact. Would multicultural education be marginalised with its time in the classroom squeezed by other priorities and with debate about its development abandoned in favour of a focus on individual subjects, assessment arrangements and tightly defined programmes of study? (Verma, 1994) Would there really be scope for initiatives outside the National Curriculum in teaching about racism (e.g. Naidoo, 1992; Gaine, 1995, chapter 4)?

The aspirations of those involved in introducing the new curriculum were not in doubt. Publications from the National Curriculum Council repeatedly spelled out how teachers in different subject areas might fulfil their responsibility to "*prepare all pupils for life in a world where they will meet, live and work with peoples of different cultures, religions, languages and ethnic origins.*" (NCC, 1991 quoted by Grinter, 1994). But critics claimed that the whole-school cross-curricular themes were not statutory, there was too little time for schools to meet the requirements that were covered by statute, the tight prescription of programmes of study left little scope for experimentation, and the increasing focus on individual subjects undermined efforts to tackle cross-curricular themes (e.g. Grinter, 1994; Gaine, 1995).

This pessimism is counteracted by reports of curriculum initiatives in schools with a record of success in multi-ethnic areas. Some teachers *have* succeeded within the framework of the National Curriculum in "*using appropriate subject content to promote an understanding of cultural, religious and linguistic diversity*" (Ofsted, 1999, para 87). Some schools have been seen to be "*sensitive to the identities of students... (making) efforts to include in the curriculum their histories, languages, religions and cultures (and drawing) on student identities to illustrate texts and/or complex concepts*" (Blair and Bourne, 2000, pp. 8 - 9). Work in the 70's and 80's had indicated that such work was very rare in mainly white schools. In this chapter we examine how far children, parents and teachers thought that preparation for life in a diverse society was addressed in the curriculum in the case study schools.

8.2 Observations made by children, parents and teachers

Preparing for life in a diverse society

We regularly gave those we interviewed the opportunity to tell us about any work that addressed issues of cultural diversity. Thus, for example, head teachers were asked what they saw as key policy issues for the school in relation to having a very small minority ethnic presence there. Other teachers were asked about teaching minority ethnic children or about preparing all their pupils through work in the classroom for life in a culturally diverse society. It is important to note one limitation of our work in relation to the secondary schools. Because we were interviewing pupils in Years 7 - 9 in these schools, we may not have learned of relevant work taking place in Years 10 and 11. For example, the policy papers provided by one school indicated that two half-term units of the PSE curriculum in Year 10 are devoted to "Prejudice, Human Rights and Religion", but we were not told about them because we did not interview pupils or staff who were involved. The parent of a Year 8 girl from an Indian background who was in the study told us about one of her older children who was not in the study:

> *Peter's sociology teacher was saying that she liked Peter to contribute to the classes so the other children will have an awareness that family is not the same everywhere. So I suppose just by being present he's able to give them an insight into a totally different idea of what family is. Because family's not necessarily mum, dad and two children. I mean, not just our family, there's so many different kinds of family anyway. But she was saying it's quite valuable to have somebody who can actually provide a picture.*

It is likely that we have overlooked some relevant work at the upper end of some secondary schools. Our findings apply to the age range we studied - Years 3 - 9.

In six of our fourteen schools no teacher we spoke to mentioned multicultural education or any related theme in connection with that age range. In no school in the sample did we find evidence of a fully developed strategy for preparing pupils through the curriculum for life in a diverse society. Some teachers (most commonly senior staff in primary schools) expressed the view that their school needed to pay greater attention to this task. The efforts they had made in that direction are discussed in more detail below. But, first, we will illustrate the status quo in the overwhelming majority of the schools, highlighting the comments that were made on the teaching of two core curriculum subjects.

Naseema, a Pakistani girl in Year 8, said that they did not learn about different counting systems in mathematics: "*...if you like learn stuff about different cultures, that's mainly in RE.*" She went on to describe a recent lesson in English:

> *N: ...you do learn about other backgrounds for literature cos this year we've been doing, um, Caribbean... We did one poem and we didn't do very much on it. We just read it, understood the way it was written phonetically...*
>
> *I: Right. Did the class, which is a top set class...?*
>
> *N: Yeah.*
>
> *I: Did they take that seriously cos it's quite a serious subject?*
>
> *N: No, not really. There was a lot of, cos on the video you really read out the video and cos you had different accent and that you said words a little differently, then some people started doing it themselves and tried to sound like him and putting on an African accent and sounded really stupid.*
>
> *I: Right and they were doing it really to make fun?*

N: Yeah.
I: What did the teacher do about it?
N: She found it amusing.
I: Right. She thought they were being quite funny.
N: Yeah.
I: Did you?
N: I didn't think it was – though, I didn't think it was very funny cos they can't help the way their accent is but we, you know, needless to say they were all boys and some boys are very immature ...(fades)
I: A thing like that can happen in an atmosphere which is just fun, there's no harm in it, or it can happen in an atmosphere where actually there is a bit of malice, a bit of...(fades) What do you think it was like on that occasion?
N: Ah it was just done in fun.
I: There was no real harm done.
N: No, there was no real harm done. They were just doing it to get attention.... There's never anything Eastern or there's, there's no, it always like English, basically or, there's hardly any American, even if it's still the same language, but it's very different, still the same language.

The Head of English in a similar suburban school in another region thought that the perception that pupils in his school would have of other cultures would be "*probably still very white middle class insular*". He thought that the English curriculum could possibly play a part in counteracting that: "*Obviously opening up the curriculum is one thing that we need to do in some of the things we address, some of the texts we look at.*" But there were two problems, he felt, for a school in a mainly white area that took on that agenda. Firstly, there is the challenge of ensuring that whatever is done has an impact:

... unless you associate with people of different cultural backgrounds and recognise that, oh, those children are away because its Ramadan, these children, it's the Passover, all these things going on in their lives outside, that fixes it and makes it real, that you are living in a multicultural society. Just studying it dryly as a theoretical issue is, um, it doesn't have the impact because you know, it doesn't really impinge, it's just ideas, it's just knowledge.

Secondly, there is the challenge of lacking expertise and experience in the department:

Again part of that problem (i.e. the problem of opening up the curriculum) is because you can buy some really duff resources and you can spend four hundred quid on a set of books that do not work. That don't... that are just boring, so again it's finding out, researching knowledge, researching what works, and again, that is a time issue... Until we were split into separate authorities, we were all part of Y, and as English teachers, as Heads of English, we used to have meetings really, really regularly. There would be 50 Heads of English there, and all from massively different kinds of schools and massively different backgrounds. And there was so much talk going on, you'd pick up masses of ideas. But we were split into separate authorities about two or three years ago, and um, eight of us meet up now and all from fairly similar kinds of schools. So you know the kind of, the access to ideas disappears a bit. It's certainly an issue we've got to take on board, far more thoroughly than we have done.

The Head of Maths in Naseema's school would have been disappointed if he had heard her comments about maths. He told us:

> *T: Umm, we do talk about the contribution different cultures make, it's not something that we spend much time on, apart from Year 7, mainly because of the pressures of time getting through the curriculum... We particularly talk about the Greek contribution, but we also get people around the class and talk about ways in which, not necessarily from an ethnic point of view, but just ways that they have come across different topics, different ... , different ways, particularly things like long multiplication... Long division - sort of methods that people use, ... by parents in many cases, rather than picked up from primary schools.*

However, at another stage of his interview he modified that position. He had been invited to comment on the efforts that had been made in urban settings to work through mathematics to address some of the issues around living in a culturally diverse and unequal society.

> *T: I'm not sure. I would be concerned about how it would be dealt with, umm, you know in a sensitive enough way in a day to day to basis in the classroom. I could see, I could see members of staff who would find it quite difficult.*
>
> *I: Difficult because of their own attitudes and feelings or because of their technical skills?*
>
> *T: Not because of their technical skills, I don't think. I think more because they would perceive the area as a hot potato or of political correctness and therefore they would be very wary of leaping across in the wrong way and be seen to be prejudiced in some way. I can think of one or two people in particular who would almost want a script that they read from to make sure that they weren't imparting anything wrong. And I can understand that...which is fair enough but does leave you feeling vulnerable to being accused of being incorrect.*

He perceived a contrast with the subject of gender issues in mathematics, which the department was trying to address. For the staff team those issues appeared to have a higher priority. The position was similar in other secondary schools. One teacher emphasised that mathematics is a universal language and was chiefly concerned that some children needed help with English in SATs tests involving written problems or dictated mental arithmetic. Another explained:

> *"We're all trying to obey the National Numeracy Scheme at the moment - which is starting in earnest next term. I don't remember that taking into account of any difference in race, religion..."*

A third described their approach as

> *"very traditional - sit down, do the exercise".*

Mathematics co-ordinators in primary schools were more likely to describe attempts to introduce children to different counting systems in History or to explore the mathematical patterns behind Chinese numbers. The co-ordinator in one school related the question to the school's overall aspirations for mathematics (outlined in the last section of Table 8.1 below):

> *Well we are trying to aim for numeracy to be more cross-curricular so it comes into all elements of the curriculum. So in anything we need to do we seem to be bringing in maths - whether it seems to be talking about history in the way that the Egyptians did maths and talking about religions and numbers. For instance we are bringing in counting with the children in our class assembly doing Japanese counting 1-10 and*

doing their karate moves to it. We are showing the fact that it is brought in, in leisure activities. I also have a little girl who is going to do 1-10 in Hebrew and show us the differences. Children are actually getting used to using the language. It is very difficult. It is not that it is insignificant but everybody is getting an equal opportunity to take in the maths language and use it in different forms, of course in different subjects.

Two of the primary teachers in different schools who were keen to introduce such strategies echoed the concern of one of the secondary teachers in that they thought they were not sanctioned in the required curriculum. One contrasted the situation with her native Australia: "*There's not honestly a lot you can do because the curriculum here, the timetable is strict and not flexible.*"

No senior staff expressed that view, but none claimed either that their school was doing all that could be done or as much as they sensed a researcher in this field would be expecting. A small number had invested in learning resources, but usually without a stated overall strategy. Extracts from the accounts given by some primary school head teachers are presented in Table 8.1. That is followed by accounts from staff in one school that had put a curriculum team structure in place to support curriculum development in this area.

Table 8.1
Accounts given by heads and teachers of education for diversity in their primary schools

Head Teacher: *We do all the right things, we've got all the multicultural books. But there isn't, um, it's not at the forefront in the way that it would be if I were - you know, I taught in East London when I started out years ago, and life was very, I mean it was different then.*
Head Teacher: In curriculum planning having a low proportion of minority ethnic pupils "*allows us not to have an awareness of multicultural... Also, with the small numbers we get odd languages and odd needs of pupils. So you can't build up any major stocks in any major language in the library. You know you have... and that's a problem... I think, because our children have got really big needs in, in learning needs all the way round, it's something that, though we've done work on - I mean, we celebrate feast days, that type of thing - we haven't.. multicultural hasn't been something we've raised the profile of. I mean, we did have a head that had come from inner London. As she went, you know, other things took its place...*"
Head Teacher: *So we don't have an EM policy in our school. We don't have part of our maths policy that determines what we should do with ethnic minority children. But we do have a philosophy of including all children, valuing all children, valuing all families, and trying to reach the needs of all families.*
Head Teacher: *"It is an area where we have been building up viewing aspects of multiculturalism to the curriculum and we have had an international day last year and we are having one this year... I am sure there are much bigger and better things going on else where but at the moment we have been quite school centred because of taking over the school but it has been identified as having serious weaknesses. So that has to be the priority first. In the Autumn we are going to have a day where we choose a particular country and we do dance. We have done a fair amount but here the multicultural co-ordinator is looking towards extending that and she has got a good background of dealing with multiculturalism from her previous employment."*

The teacher responsible for multicultural education and the teacher with responsibility for religious education were interviewed together. They said: "*We have curriculum teams. We are on the same curriculum team because there are a lot of cross curricular links with PSHE, equal opps... EAL as well and we all need to talk about that.*"

The multicultural education coordinator was asked what multicultural education meant in the school. "*It means raising an awareness of other cultures and hopefully also as we are getting more children from different backgrounds, helping them to integrate into the school and celebrating their differences of culture. Using them as a resource and their parents, so that they do feel part of the school. I mean that is something we are still working on. I work in the nursery and I have not got anybody. We have not got many in KS1 who are from another ethnic group. That was one of the things that I know Pat (Head Teacher) was keen on doing. Just raising the awareness because we are quite a white school. Sometimes it is harder in a school where there are mainly white children. It is harder to be multicultural. If you are in a school where there are a really good mix of races, it is much easier to celebrate festivals because it means something to that particular group of children. You can involve the parents. The last school I worked in was very multicultural so it was much easier in a way to do be a multicultural school.*

I: You are able to make that contrast. I wonder what you think can be done with the situation in the school...
T: I have had a small budget. So I have tried to buy posters like Welcome in different languages. The literacy co-ordinator is very aware of multicultural issues. So she is buying a lot of dual text books. When she buys books she tries to get dual language. Also books which reflect different cultures. So that is on-going and it becomes part of the curriculum and part of the literacy hour, using literacy from other cultures.

Attitudes towards diversity

Teachers' classroom practice and schools' curriculum initiatives in this field express deep-seated attitudes towards diversity that have a broad impact on both individuals and organisations. One expression of these attitudes is the perception and treatment of individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds. This will be discussed more fully in Chapter 11, but it is important to record some of the findings here because they are relevant to schools' approaches to this aspect of the curriculum. Some teachers, parents and older children were invited to comment on where their class/year group/school might be placed on a continuum that described different ways of dealing with diversity. This example of how the question was put is taken from the final phase of an interview with a father from a Pakistani background:

> *I have a very general question, which I feel you could have a comment on. Schools can treat ethnic minorities, or linguistic minorities, in different ways. They might just see the children as a child like any other, who should be treated absolutely no differently, from anyone else. They will treat everybody the same, equally fair. Or they might, say, see the minority children in the school as an opportunity, as a source of cultural enrichment, that helps bring diversity to the culture. Or it might be a mixed picture of one of these extremes. Where would you place this school, in your experience, amongst all those possibilities? What do you think they're aspiring to do here?*

Table 8.2 presents a sample of the replies that were given to this question. It reflects the balance of responses we received so that the bulk of the quotations express the view that

"fairness" is paramount and that all children should be treated in the same way for that reason. The majority of respondents were concerned that paying attention to children's distinctive cultural heritage or different past experiences would undermine their efforts to maintain an ideal of equal treatment for all. As we showed in chapter 6, parents varied in their views on the issue. All would have shared the teachers concern for fairness but many would not have seen that as incompatible with paying attention to their children's distinctive cultural heritage.

Table 8.2 Where did respondents place themselves on a "multicultural" continuum?
A Year 8 form tutor said: "*...you see all of the ethnic minority children are not really a minority. I don't really like using that term and what's politically correct at the moment? As far as I'm concerned if you have somebody who has a different colour of skin to everybody else, that doesn't mean that they are any different to anybody else. That doesn't mean that they are different. For me to actually differentiate between somebody with a different coloured skin is a bit like saying that somebody is diabetic and somebody isn't. It makes no difference to me. I try to treat everybody as an individual with their behaviour patterns or their good behavioural patterns as an individual person rather than picking anybody out. Whether that is everybody else's way of looking at things, I think it is, looking around everyone seems to work along those principles.*"
The Head of Maths in a secondary school said: "*I certainly think that within our department that we do extremely well and treat everyone as equals. Every one on their merits. There is no prejudice whatsoever that I have ever picked up here with regards to the different ethnic minorities. I think that is part of the reason that we haven't really considered that. We do a lot of result analysis. That is a big thing at the moment. We have never really looked at the ethnic minority. I know you are compiling data about how the ethnic minorities do at the GCSE's. We have never done that. Really it has never come to our minds because we do see everybody as equals.*"
A primary school Numeracy Co-ordinator said: "*As far as I'm concerned, you teach Maths according to the child's ability – not their ethnic minority [laughs]... I don't treat them any differently to any other...and I wouldn't expect them to behave any differently to any other child.*" Later in a different context she said: "*But that could be said for every child in this school. I'm worried that we are singling out individual children and we don't, we treat them all exactly the same. I think that's how it should be.*"
A Year 6 class teacher found it hard to answer the question. She felt that it depended on the context. "*I would hope that you would treat everyone equally in how you teach them. But you also want each individual to, you know, talk about their experiences and be confident enough to say I do this and whatever culture they're from. So I would hope it would be in the middle. You need a mixture of both. So you actually... I think you have to get it that there's a time when they can talk about something like their religion, or in Circle Time, their experiences or their country. Because I know that when Ellen (a child who was not in our sample) came she actually wanted to talk to the class about where she came from, the country she came from and she showed pictures of where she lived. So she did that. So the children were aware of it. If they're confident, they can promote it. There's none better than the child who's been there.*" She emphasised that this applies to every child if they've got something they want to share, not just minority ethnic pupils. She also used Circle Time, as well as PHSE, as an opportunity to talk about prejudice and challenge racist attitudes.

Another teacher in the same school as the last informant replied to the "continuum" question in a similar way:

> *Well, I like to treat all children the same in respect to behaviour with exceptions of what's happening outside of school, like at home. So you have to have that in mind. Whereas we're always looking at what's unique about us and what's special about us, because they can often be the things that are picked on by other children. It's usually the first thing that, you know, boys go for. So I suppose it's, what you really look at is what is unique about us and why is that special...*

Later in the interview she gave an example of this:

> *We've just been talking about what's special about us and how we're different, and everything else. And they wrote some poems about themselves. And when I was asking them for some ideas about why they are special, we had a few ideas come up. But then we had other children saying - well, you're special for this reason, that's different about you, that's really cool. So they'd write that down. So we had other kids, you know, sort of highlighting uniqueness amongst the others. So I think that they're developing that idea as well. I think they're doing really well with it... We're actually doing some self-portraits as well. So hopefully we can keep it all together.*

It is worth noting that the roots of her confident approach to work with minority ethnic pupils in England lay in her previous experience in a multi-ethnic school - an experience that relatively few of the teachers in the sample had had (see Chapter 11).

Enhancing sensitivity to other cultures: minority ethnic children as a resource

Naseema, who was quoted at the beginning of this section, argued that "*it is more important for them (white children) to learn about minority cultures, instead of the actual Asians learning about the white culture, because there's more white people than there are Asians.*" Most of the parents we interviewed did not appear to expect that the school curriculum would enhance an interest in or a sensitivity to other cultures. Some, though, had been disappointed by particular experiences. For example, Josie's father, who had come from Pakistan as a boy and maintained a strong commitment to Islam, was unhappy with the approach his daughter's school had adopted to sex education when she was in Year 9.

> *They treat all as one religion, but Muslim children are raised differently. Children should know the basics, but schools go into too much detail. Josie was embarrassed by questions she was asked. I didn't know they were doing it. Josie's mother would explain sex education to her daughter, not me.*

In subsequent discussion it became clear that his older son had gone through the programme but not talked about it and that this father had not known that as a parent he could ask to withdraw his child from the lessons.

Both parents and teachers were aware that people can easily become upset if their practices or views in such areas are challenged. It is "*as if you are walking a tightrope*", said one teacher. The tensions may be illustrated from a comment about a primary school in another part of the country which was strongly committed to negotiating acceptable arrangements over issues such as sex education. However, when they put on a musical that was intended to be an event bringing the whole school community together, a Sikh parent was not happy: "*Joseph and his coat, it was a brilliant play, but why did it have to be a religious one? It could have been a play about anything.*"

These sensitivities may be illustrated further by highlighting some of our informants' observations on the role of minority ethnic children as a resource for their peers' learning. It will be obvious that children from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds can form a resource of great potential value in schools where their experience and knowledge are not widely shared. We heard repeatedly that, where teachers drew on this resource with sensitivity, there were benefits not only for the teaching of the planned curriculum content but also through its impact on the image of the contributors among their peers. At the same time many teachers shared the concerns of those who warned that this would not suit everyone, that some children's cultural knowledge was limited and that some class groups would not be receptive. We heard accounts of children contributing successfully in Key Stage 1 (talking about the Chinese New Year and displaying how Arabic is spoken) and in Key Stages 2 and 3 (e.g. contributing to geography and RE). For example, the mother of a Year 4 boy from a Pakistani background reported:

> *Sometimes Jabal has come home and said that he was talking about this and that and they were talking about Islam. About the Koran...how they read it...how they do it. Um, I think talking about that religion and that culture probably helps him. Yes. Yes, he can explain things – how they do it and as with all religions they discuss it. I've never stopped him from coming to church. I want him to learn about religion. I mean, if he's going to church, he's not going to turn Christian. When he goes to the Mosque, I don't think that I'd rather him not share something. So, he's never been an extra culturally proud boy. He does enjoy telling things when the teacher asks how we do it and what we do. My daughter had all the Henna and he likes it on his nails and things. So, certainly he does quite enjoy it. I mean, in a way, as I see it, as long as he is getting the best of both worlds. The best of the eastern and the best of the western – there's nothing wrong with that. That's how I see it. The best of the western and the best of the eastern and then maybe they can learn about both sides and decide.*

The contributions that some of the children had made to religious education are discussed more fully in Chapter 9, and parents' contributions to schools are discussed in Chapter 12.

Children previously educated overseas

As noted in Chapter 7, some of the children whom we interviewed had previously been educated overseas. A change of school will always disrupt the momentum of children's academic progress to some extent. When it involves moving to a different country, the disruption is inevitably greater. Some of those who came from overseas had experienced interruptions in their schooling in any case in their country of origin, e.g. if they were living in a war zone. But those who had enjoyed consistent formal education also had problems with the unfamiliar curriculum of their new schools. Children who were learning English as an additional language for the first time obviously faced the greatest difficulties, but novelties in the syllabus or method also caused significant problems. Language issues will be covered in Chapter 10. Table 8.9 illustrates the kinds of difficulty that arose independently of differences of language. We noted that parents and teachers were often aware of the challenges that the children were facing. But in the schools that were not accustomed to admitting children directly from overseas there was often little confidence in devising strategies for helping a child to bridge the gap.

Table 8.9 Problems in bridging the curriculum gap between schools
Peter (Year 7) explained how problems might arise: *Well, if he lived in a different country before, then moved over here... then, possibly, he would have learnt Maths in a different way over there, then he'd be coming over here and learning a completely new, different way. And the teacher would think he wouldn't do as well, because he's used to doing it one way, but now he's got to change.*
Luke (Year 6) recalled vividly moving back to his white mother's home town after her marriage to his black Caribbean father failed in his father's home country. He had started school in England just one year late at the age of six. He especially didn't know what to do with schoolwork '*because it was different*'. He still doesn't like RE and music, which are quite different here from how they were in the school he went to in the West Indies. '*English was hard too because of the way they taught you to write was different.*' His mother, having been to an English school herself, was able to teach him '*how to write the English way.*'
Saad (Year 6) had social difficulties which were described above. His class teacher felt that it did not help him that he arrived in Year 6 at a time when the class were working hard on SATs: *It's all SAT work. And so he kind of got dropped in on our revision bit, because we were preparing for our SATs, doing SAT tests, which he'd never done before or experienced. And so he's... I wouldn't say he's particularly SEN, but because he struggles with how the school works, and because he's been taught a different way obviously where he's come from, he works with my classroom assistant most of the time.* Saad's own perspective on the changes in school work was quite different. His teacher seems to have succeeded in shielding him from feeling a sense of failure because he had not had the preparation that the rest of the class had had for the practice SATs tests. But there were other aspects of the classroom's routines that he found novel in a way that she does not seem to have noticed: *Some of the work here was very, very easy because I learned it in Year 1 at my other school, but other work was hard because I had not learned it before.* [What was new here was] *having to make a plan for writing things. And rotating figures in geometry.* He appreciated being helped by a classroom assistant.
Arthur (who was also now in Year 6), had attended school in Guyana before coming to his present school. He had had the same class teacher throughout the intervening period. She reported: *He really has a problem with maths. His father brought his maths books in to show us what he'd been doing before. It's quite amazing. He can't do his number bonds to 10 but if you give him, like, 253 + 469 in a column sum, he can do it. In mental maths he's missing a lot... He's missing real basics. He was rote taught. So he can follow a pattern but can't explain to you why he's doing it. I feel we have not really understood what is going wrong. We've had to pass it on to the senior school. Whether it's language or whether it's processing what you've got to do... He went on the SEN register for maths. We tried to fill in what was missing. He went out with a group when they were doing mental maths .. Perhaps it is too late to learn a new method of adding a column of figures. So we tried to build on the mental. He was allowed to continue using a method he knew if it worked... It would have been different if he was in Year 3. But it's too late to change in Year 5 or 6.*
Mandy's mother recalled that her schooling had been unsatisfactory in Sierra Leone before she came here. It was "*not a proper school, not like here. Probably one day she would go and another day she would not go. You know, circumstances would not allow her.*" When Mandy started at school here, she did know how to read in English but her spelling was poor. The school had given her extra help to get over the problem, but her interview with us indicated that she was still not confident about spelling two years later.

Some schools had learned over the years the particular problems that might face children from countries from which they regularly took new admissions. Thus, the SENCo in one of the schools that regularly admitted Japanese pupils observed that they needed extra help at first with investigation work both because of the heavy demands it makes of language skills and because it contrasted with teaching strategies they were accustomed to at home.

> *"Where possible, youngsters are grouped together. For example, two came today, and we will try - it just happens to work - are placed in tutor groups with other Japanese pupils."*

In most of these schools it is not usually possible, of course, to match a new entrant with a compatriot or a speaker of their first language. The teachers would then try to identify "*somebody who's a nice child, a calm child*" to act as a buddy and show them around. It was noticeable that, while some staff emphasised the value of mentoring arrangements and pupils did seem to speak positively about their early days in the schools where such arrangement were in place, pupils did not actually refer specifically to their mentors very often. In most cases they outgrew the need for a mentor quite quickly, though some appear to have remained friendly with theirs for years afterwards. An alternative approach, which was adopted much less often, was for a teacher to prepare a whole class to act as supporters of a new child and let them know if this child was lost or bullied. In other settings considerable reliance was placed on a teaching assistant to befriend the new pupil and learn more about their history and school experience.

The schools where children seemed to have a relatively smooth start tended to be those where there was a carefully planned routine that was supported from the top and was familiar to all. One head teacher described his school's general approach thus:

> *With any family we go through an induction process with them and get back to them to see if the pupil has settled in... When we know a child is coming to us we make arrangements for the child and family to visit. I would talk to the parents and gather as much of the background as we can. If the child has been in school before I would call up records and use that information, although we do tend to do that alongside our own judgement. A child would be introduced to a class and would have one or two buddies who would look out for that child, make sure they had a partner in PE, that they know what to do at lunchtime, all of that. Then we would review that and talk to parents after two, three weeks and see how things are going from their point of view, talk to the child and see if there's anything further they want to do. We would do that with (all new entrants).*

Schools that had a well-oiled strategy for admitting new pupils whose previous school was in the UK would usually be able to adapt it for children from overseas whose admission threw up greater challenges - once key staff had learned from experience to appreciate the differences. However, that depends on a basic level of good will and appropriately high expectations of all children, irrespective of their background. (For an account of what can happen when those key features are missing, see the story told by Naseema in Chapter 10.) In some cases the curriculum gap may be perceived as too great to bridge. For instance, the mother of Saad (whose difficulties were described above) felt that standards are very low in this country. When her daughter left a school in Uganda and was put in a secondary school here, she told her mother that the things they were given to do she had done two years before in her previous school.

Training, support and curriculum development - the impact of national initiatives

During our interviews with the teachers we checked basic information about their training and experience but did not seek their views on the national framework for work in this area. However, as the school visits continued and members of the research team compared notes, we became aware of a rather surprising paradox. Many of the teachers, especially senior staff, referred to Ofsted inspections and post-Ofsted action plans quite often, but they never seemed to mention them in the context of our questions about multicultural education. Similarly there were many references to the National Curriculum and to the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, but these were rarely described as supporting the work that we were investigating. In fact, as with one of the teachers quoted above, it was more likely that these developments would be cited as a reason for *not* covering issues of relevance to preparing pupils for life in a culturally diverse society.[5] We had not explored these issues systematically during the interview phase of the project. So we highlighted them for discussion when we held feedback sessions with staff in eight of the schools.

Ofsted has recently sharpened its approach to evaluating schools' strategies for addressing inclusion issues and, particularly, for promoting racial equality (Osler and Morrison, 2000; Ofsted, 2000). The comments during the feedback sessions suggested that this shift has had a noticeable effect on schools' experience of the process. During the earlier period neither the process of inspection nor the subsequent discussion of the report had stimulated thinking on preparing pupils for citizenship in a diverse society in any of the schools in our sample. But in the two primary schools that had been inspected over the past year the picture was different. In one the management team had been asked probing questions on preparing for teaching and cultural diversity. The head said: "*We had to put our hands up and say: 'No, we haven't.*" The action plan in that school covers this issue. The draft report on the second acknowledged what it was already doing but also gave significant attention to how the school might enhance teaching of "*the knowledge and understanding needed for life in a multicultural environment*".

One head teacher made a comparison between her current mainly white school and the inner city school where she had taught previously and said she thought it is easier to celebrate diversity in multi-ethnic schools. Teachers in two schools separately argued that the prescribed National Curriculum does not encourage this anyway. In one of the schools a number of staff echoed the concerns of the early critics quoted in the Introduction above, complaining that time is highly constrained, leaving very little room for a more flexible curriculum addressing local issues. The deputy head in the other school highlighted the limited perspective offered by some teaching materials, giving the example of materials about an Indian village that they had used recently. There was nothing about the modern India with cities and industry to balance the impression given by pictures of a rural village. In each case national advisers would point out that there were solutions open to the staff and that information about them is available on the Internet and elsewhere. However, their situation in a mainly white school with little or no experience of multi-ethnic settings meant that some of the staff were not alert to these sources of support.

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[5] There was an important exception to this - the perceived value of the National Literacy Strategy in fostering a review of language work in one of the schools. (See Chapter 10.)

We had pointed out that during our interviews no teacher in any of the schools had quoted any recent development at national level as encouraging a focus on this area of work. This was accepted generally in the staff groups we met. The key problem was seen to be that issues relating to education for cultural diversity were squeezed out by other priorities to which league table value was attached.

The Teacher Training Agency has recently issued new guidance on initial teacher education, designed to ensure that initial teacher training equips all new teachers to contribute to raising the attainment of minority ethnic pupils (TTA, 2000). But at the time of our visit most teachers had been trained under an earlier regime. Their concerns about being ill prepared for work with a more diverse population will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 11.

8.3 Overview of findings

1. No school in this sample had a fully developed strategy for preparing pupils through the curriculum for life in a diverse society. A small proportion of head teachers and senior staff, mainly in primary schools, indicated that they thought their school needed to pay greater attention to this task, a small number had invested in appropriate resources, and one school had put a curriculum team structure in place to support this development.

2. No teacher in any of the schools quoted any recent development at national level as encouraging a focus on this area of work. In fact, a small number of teachers referred to the need to focus on the National Literacy or Numeracy Strategies as a reason for being unable to give attention to this dimension in curriculum development. The teachers were interviewed before the schools had begun to introduce the new National Curriculum programmes of study in Citizenship.

3. Until very recently Ofsted inspections of the schools did not appear to have stimulated thinking on preparing pupils through the curriculum for life in a diverse society. This issue had been addressed during the most recent school inspections.

4. Presented with alternative ideals of how diversity might be treated, most informants saw their school or class as trying to treat all children equally and playing down ethnic and cultural differences. A minority of schools or classrooms in this sample was seen as partially adopting the alternative stance of stressing cultural diversity and treating minority children in the school as a source of cultural enrichment.

5. All children are a resource for their peers' learning, and children from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds form a resource of great potential value in schools where at present their experience and knowledge are not widely shared. Teaching which drew on this resource sensitively was seen by our informants as effective in conveying its planned curriculum content and as contributing to the development of mutual respect and understanding between ethnic groups.

6. Very few of the teachers whom we interviewed spoke with knowledge or confidence about issues relating to multicultural education. Those who did had usually had experience in a school in a multi-ethnic area in the past. There was no

evidence that either initial training or in-service training had prepared these staff for the challenges of diversity that they can expect to meet with increasing frequency in the future.

7. All the children who had entered school in this country later than their peers had attended school before (though their schooling had been disrupted by national conflicts in one or two cases). While those who were learning English as an additional language for the first time faced the greatest difficulties, some of the problems that the children encountered with school work arose not from having to work in a new language but from differences in syllabus or method between the schools. Parents and teachers were aware of this but often unsure how best to help the child to bridge the gap.

8. All the head teachers and most (but not all) of the teachers whom we asked about the subject were able to describe strategies that were employed at school or class level for inducting children who were admitted late in a school year or from another country. Where induction had been planned with the child's specific needs in mind and the transition had been facilitated as a result, children and parents were very appreciative of what had been done. This was only possible if a child's educational history and language background had been fully explored at school entry.

9. The schools which offered examples of good practice in inducting children from overseas had often gained experience of a particular pattern of late admissions, e.g. schools near a large facility run by an overseas company and schools in an area where increasing numbers of asylum seekers and refugees were settling. The practices that they had developed which were evaluated positively by children and parents included:
   - the appointment of one or more peer mentors (especially if they had well-defined tasks and some preparation for them);
   - effective arrangements for occasional interpreting where children were at the early stages of learning English with teaching support in some cases, including help from an LEA team;
   - unobtrusive support from a classroom assistant in a primary school classroom.

   In most cases such support had normally only been given for a short period, though the social link that had been created had sometimes remained significant for the child for much longer.

Chapter 9 Religious Education, school assembly and non-Christian religious requirements

Summary

The research questions addressed in this section are:

- To what extent do curricula, school ethos and classroom practices reflect the diversity of society as a whole and meet the needs and interests of all children in the schools, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds who come from a range of faith traditions?
- How do minority ethnic parents and children see the relationship between their home culture and the children's school culture in relation to religious faith and practice?
- How do teachers in the schools view the religious education of children and young people from minority ethnic groups?

The principal findings reported here are:

- In this sample of schools the religious education curriculum reflected the diversity of contemporary society more fully than any other aspect of the school curriculum. Pupils and parents responded positively both to teaching about their own religion and to the opportunities that were given for children to learn about other faith traditions.
- All the schools held regular assemblies, though the amount of worship and the range of religious content varied. Most of the schools, including one of the voluntary aided church schools, focused on other faith traditions besides Christianity in some assemblies, though this was not universal. When this happened, minority ethnic pupils from the tradition concerned were more likely to value the event highly if it was led by a staff member or visitor speaking from first hand experience of that faith community.
- Parents and pupils reported no problems in following religious dietary rules at school, but in some settings they would have appreciated greater understanding and sensitivity regarding dress code traditions and modesty relating to girls.

9.1 Introduction

It is a legal requirement that religious education (RE) is taught to all pupils in full-time education in accordance with a locally agreed syllabus. The only exception is when pupils are withdrawn at the wish of their parents. The agreed syllabus has to:

> *"reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain."*

This means that religious education is the only compulsory school subject that has an in-built multicultural perspective. As such it may represent a particular challenge to mainly white schools.

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When HMI surveyed RE in 1997, they reported that the degree of emphasis on Christianity varied between schools at all key stages. "*With a few exceptions, schools with lower numbers of pupils from ethnic minority populations spent more time on teaching about Christianity.*" (Ofsted, 1997, p. 5) The constraints on effectiveness in this field were seen to be poorly planned and over-crowded curricula, lack of coherence and progression in what was taught, limitations in teachers' subject knowledge, and a failure to create adequate opportunities for spiritual and moral development through RE, for learning *from* religions as well as learning *about* religions. These pedagogic challenges faced all schools. In addition, mainly white schools faced, in multi-faith RE, a specific and unavoidable requirement that might be seen to challenge a community's definition of its own identity. As an inspector has pointed out, Parliamentary debates about RE over a long period have rarely considered it in educational terms. Instead, "*almost invariably it has been caught up in the unfinished debate on British national identity.*" (Copley, 1997, p.1) With this in mind, as well as the pedagogic challenges, we selected RE as one of the key foci in our examination of how curriculum issues affect minority ethnic pupils in mainly white schools.

9.2 Observations made by children, parents and teachers

Teaching about a range of faith traditions

The head teacher of one primary school saw work in Religious Education (RE) as contributing to -

> *making sure that children are not just aware of their own background but the cultural diversity of London... We do a fair amount of that through certain festivals in our RE and multicultural programme, through having visitors into school, also celebrating Chinese New Year, i.e. Dragon dancing.*

The head teacher of another primary school made a similar point in slightly different terms, linking the work in RE to celebrations in assembly and to multicultural approaches in other areas of the curriculum:

> *And we celebrate a whole range of different festivals so that gives us an opportunity to appreciate their culture and celebrate with them, and often the family will bring appropriate gifts to celebrate the festival and we would encourage that. And we would pick up other things, for example, three classes are doing Egyptian studies at the moment and we would pick up Egyptian maths, etc... we would look at different cultures and their science and maths contribution and so on. So we would value cultures in that way. And in our RE, we look at other cultures and we are fairly well resourced, not generously, but we've got artefacts and resources for other cultures which we can use... We start from the point of view of inclusivity..*

Some heads and co-ordinators of RE referred to their obligation to follow the locally agreed syllabus as a reference point for curriculum planning. Thus, for example, in one primary school it was felt that an adverse comment in a recent Ofsted inspection report had not been fair to the school:

> *We have to as a school, are obliged to, follow the agreed syllabus. We were just doing what we should have been doing. They didn't seem to like the agreed syllabus.*

In some cases we formed the impression that it was the need to follow the local Standing Advisory Committee guidelines that had determined a school's commitment to teaching about a range of faith traditions.

The misunderstandings that such teaching must challenge were illustrated in the response of a Year 6 child in the same school to a survey carried out by the school's RE Co-ordinator. She reported:

> *He was saying that white people are like Christians and there are people who aren't white and they are like Paki's and they don't follow the same religion.*

Table 9.1 illustrates the range of views among parents and pupils on the subject of multi-faith RE that were expressed to us directly or reported by teachers. We were not interviewing majority parents and so did not have the opportunity to learn directly from them about the reported resistance to these developments in some quarters. Where teachers describe different patterns of reaction in the passages quoted below, the variation may arise from local circumstances, e.g. inter-communal tension in a nearby town. There was strong support for the multi-faith approach from many minority ethnic parents and from some children. As the table illustrates, their motives varied markedly. The salient factor for some of our informants was that they saw teaching about their religion as symbolising acceptance of their community and a rejection of racism. Others were motivated by a commitment to ideals of internationalism and multiculturalism.

Table 9.1 Reactions from parents and pupils on multi-faith religious education
The mother of a Year 9 boy (Joshua) from a Black Caribbean background, who had a strong evangelical Christian faith herself, was relaxed about the school's arrangements for RE: *They do multi-studies, don't they, I let them get on with it. It's good for them to know there are different faiths.*
A father who had come here from India and whose own faith background was Hindu said of his daughter (Savarna) in Year 4: *... she's taken an interest in religious studies, in bible. She knows a lot..... you know, if she comes in and says, "The Muslim god, this is what happened", and I would tell her what happened, because I know... I come from a background that knows many religions... If there's a topic (meaning a topic taught in the class), I would chat to her about it... It's good to have interest in each and every religion if you can... If you know, it would make you look good in front of them, they would take interest in you.*
Naseema, a Year 8 girl from a Pakistani Muslim background, was asked what she thought should go into a handbook for teachers about how best to help children from an Asian background. She said: *I don't think the teachers really do much. I think, the only time, I think the only teachers that would probably understand how, how it is for people from different cultures is probably the R.E. teachers, I think. Because they understand more about it, because they actually teach it and they-. They teach about culture and religions and, they, I think it's easier for you to probably talk to teachers like that instead of, like, an English teacher.*
Some children were more concerned about the academic demands of the subject than its interest level or religious content. Like many learners of English as an additional language Sachi, a Japanese girl in Year 7, had found the humanities hardest when she first arrived in the UK because of the language demands they made. By the time of her interview with us she had overcome problems in history and geography, but the language of RE remained a challenge: *We use this Bible but I don't understand these hard words*
The mother of a Year 4 boy with a Pakistani Muslim background said of her son, Jabal: *He likes exploring things in school about the Muslim religion, how to read the Koran. So, maybe he is quite proud of it.*

Avtar, a Year 9 boy from an East African Asian Sikh background talked about ignorant racist teasing in which a dual heritage child was called a "Paki" by white peers. He was asked if there was anything in the education in this school which helped people to understand these things better:
A: Yeah. In R.E., it's like, they talk about Sikhism and I wear these bracelets... That's, like, something to do with religion and, like, people, well after they'd done the R.E. work, they're like, "Yeah, you're Sikh - you wear the bangle and stuff".
I: Right. So then, they recognised it a bit better?
A: Yeah.
I: Did that lead, did they treat that with respect, or did they use it as an opportunity to sort of like tease you, call you names?
A: No. I don't think anyone would tease me, really, about that.
I: They'd respect it?
A: Yeah...
I: So, the school, in its R.E. is trying to cover... those sorts of things?
A: Yeah, it's covered most things, like Jews, Jewish religion and Hinduism and Muslim religion and things like that.

A long standing head of department in a secondary school that was situated on the edge of a town with a large Muslim community reported:
...it's predominantly white students here, obviously, but I'm conscious of a change in attitude amongst them. I mean, maybe it's that they are more prepared to articulate something that's always been there but, for example, in R.E. we do, you know, it's one of our world religions. We study three world religions in key stage three, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam and there is never any difficulty when we do Christianity and Hinduism, but interestingly, I feel, when we study Islam we get, um,
we've had over the years, not a significant number but an increasing number of letters from parents saying, "I don't want my children to study this", and also comments from students, increasingly, again not in huge numbers, but an increasing number of comments from students saying, "Why do we have to study this, you know, I don't want to be a Muslim, you know and er, I don't want to learn about Muslims", and that sort of thing and it's that study in particular that seems to um um generate that sort of response. Others don't.

In a school in an area where racist political activity had been reported a Year 3 teacher was asked about how parents reacted when teaching focused on different faiths:
T: They actually seem to enjoy it because the children go home enthused by it and start telling their parents. And their response always seems to be, "Oh we never did that when we were at school." So it is actually informing them as well. They do seem very positive about it.
I: On the other hand there is reported to be some racist feeling in some of the areas around the school and I wonder whether any of the parents felt that it was inappropriate or intimidated by this kind of development inside the school.
T: I have had the experience of that before in (a London borough) about religion, about the fact that Christianity was being taught less than the other religions that we were teaching during that year. I don't know whether within this school it is the way that I have spoken to my children and they have gone back and conveyed it to their parents, but they have never actually approached me about it. What I have had is other people coming in like there is one lady who is Jewish. She has come in talking about that she liked the fact that that was mentioned. It all seems to be positive comments this year although I do know that it is not always. I have just been very lucky.

Some RE Co-ordinators indicated that they were aware of the risk of focusing on superficial matters so that pupils developed only a limited understanding of individual faiths. A small number of pupils shared that concern. For example, Naseema, the Year 8 girl who was quoted above, described her form's introduction to Islam at the beginning of the year as "*very basic stuff... just like five pillars, like, Ramadan*".

She hoped that they would go into more depth higher up the school. She acknowledged that people did take it seriously and understood the point of having a religion, needing something there to believe in. However, "*when you learn about the different praying rituals, I don't think they really understand it, why they do it and why they don't simply just put their hands together and say a prayer.*"

Many pupils in a partially secular society know little about the faith to which their family is nominally attached. A deputy head described the reaction of two Hindu pupils who were cousins when he asked them about their religion: "*They looked at me as though they don't know what I'm talking about.*" The father of one of them, whom we interviewed, would not have been surprised at this. He told the interviewer that he had come to this country from India at the age of two and grown up here. When asked if he was a practising Hindu, he said:

> *No not really...my parents they were not radical Hindus. They offered us the principles, and it was our choice whether we took it or not. Their view was that there was one god no matter how you looked at it - through either Hinduism or Christianity. School taught us Christianity, and because we understood that a lot better, the three younger brothers followed that. The eldest brother practises a little Hinduism. We really have free speech for religion, and that is the same with Anoop... If he asks me I try and tell him what I was told. He gets to see everyone's religion, and you have to respect the differences. I have eaten beef many a time. I feel if I am offered a choice, I will say no to beef, but if it is there and I don't ask, then I don't feel bad if I eat it. I understand more about Christianity. My wife practises a little bit of Hinduism. She tries to teach the kids as much as she can but the kids will take on what they want to take on.*

For some teachers the major factor in their treatment of all faith traditions was not the existence within the class of individuals with deeply held and separate religious beliefs, but a widely shared ignorance of all faiths arising from the secularisation of society. This influenced their aspirations for the subject. Some of the comments teachers made on the depth and breadth of their school's coverage of the syllabus are recorded in Table 9.2 on the next page.

Some teachers reported obstacles in their particular context that prevented them from adopting the teaching methods they would have preferred. For example, one RE Co-ordinator accepted the potential educational value of class visits to places of worship and had led successful Year 3 walking trips to a local church. "*Some had not been in a church before.*" But she thought that, if they had attempted to arrange a similar visit to a mosque, there would have been greater distances involved and many parents would have resisted paying towards the cost of transport. Others had managed to arrange such visits without resistance and with a positive response afterwards. The successful solution for some was to bring clerics from both Christian and other faiths into school as visiting speakers. They accepted that effective advance briefing about the children's level of understanding would often be important in laying the basis for a successful session.

Table 9.2 The depth and breadth of coverage of the religious education syllabus
The RE Co-ordinator in a primary school was asked about the children's attitude to learning about a variety of religions: *It depends on how it is taught. The resources are there... ultimately children do like RE. They find it a bit confusing sometimes, knowing the differences. Really, because I think that in a school like this it's, even though it's all there, it's all a bit tokenistic really because we all know that Christianity is the main one that we have to teach throughout the whole of this authority. And I think I need to edit and improve my planning, to be honest. Because I can't decide - which I've already discussed with Ofsted and said that I'm in the process of changing it [i.e. during a recent inspection visit] - I can't decide whether to study all sorts of different festivals rather than breaking it down into the religions. We'd have one on festivals, clothing, symbols and symbolism. That sort of thing. Whether to do it in groups of topics... As in topics, but you do a religion and concentrate wholly on that religion. Then you do a different thing. So you do different topics within each year.*
The head of RE in a secondary school was asked about the teaching of ethical and moral issues: *I: You're introducing kids to quite unfamiliar notions and, uh, how many take that on board? Because some of them are quite difficult.* *T: Um, I would say that the main answers when we look at ethics and moral issues, is Christian-based, I would say it is. We do moral guidance topic and we do it very much at that, basic Christianity level... something like Judaism. As far as the less familiar religions like Hinduism, and Buddhism, I don't. I think we tend to take it as just on a spiritual level of, of respect and, um, I think those, yeah, those probably get more neglected when it comes to lessons looking at ethical responses and moral issues. Probably, also, because when the teachers are more familiar with other ones as well, probably that certainly comes into it. Um, I don't know! It's difficult to answer.*
The head of RE in another secondary school commented: *I don't notice prejudice from the children at all, I don't, it's so rare that a child will giggle or laugh at something that, in my lessons, and my colleagues say the same... Very, very little outward um prejudice, shown, most students say "Oh that's interesting" or "Oh, that's different", but they don't say "Oh ha ha ha, that's rubbish, ha ha ha, they're stupid..." They don't ever say in the lesson that, I wonder when they go out if they say it, I don't know. But, um, you know we're watching Hindus worship and washing the gods with flowers. Well, that's a totally different concept to, if they know anything about Christianity... um and they're just transfixed watching. And then afterwards I've said, right, we've done all this work today. Now you can do the role play, one aspect of what you've seen. It might be from the video, it might be from the books we've read. And a lot of them role play worship very, very well, and silently mimed ? Mime? it, and they said they wanted a statue there, and they came in, they ate the, they pretended to eat the food and offer it to the god first, and bow, with no giggling, no laughing, not ha ha, this is stupid but really doing it seriously and sort of, interested enough to do it properly to the rest of the class, so we've got a very positive, I think, view of different cultures and religions.*

In a secondary school where it was felt that visits during school time would be too time-consuming because of other curriculum pressures the Head of RE was considering the possibility of organising a voluntary trip for a Year 10 group to Hindu and Buddhist temples in a nearby town. That school had taken a separate initiative to emphasise that Islam was being practised even closer to hand. Staff had made their own video about it for Year 7 groups, drawing on an older Muslim pupil and two Muslim teachers as witnesses to present the theme from three different perspectives. The pupil was growing up and practising Islam in a mainly white area, one of the teachers had been born into a Muslim family and grown up in an inner city area with a large Muslim population, and the other teacher had converted to Islam after marriage. An important message from this project was that Islamic practice is not homogeneous - an antidote to the teaching of faith traditions that offers a simplified and stereotyped portrayal of complex phenomena.

Teaching about Christianity

It has been reported that, when majority parents raise objections to the coverage of other traditions, they sometimes give the reason that it will squeeze out teaching on mainstream Christianity. In the schools we visited this was mentioned only rarely. But the distribution of work across year groups was sometimes a source of concern. The deputy head and RE co-ordinator in a primary school noted that the Year 5 syllabus largely ignored Christianity and was led by Sikhism and Islam. On the other hand, some of the pupils we interviewed whose roots were in other faith traditions felt that Christianity received much more attention than any other faith in their school. Maha, a Year 7 Muslim girl, thought it was "*interesting, but... they could choose a larger variety.*" Naseema, the older Muslim girl who argued above that Islam was treated superficially, reported that "*they teach you a lot more Christianity, because... most people in this school are actually Christian. But it does seem to drag on a bit, because it's always about the Church and the Bible and it gets, just sometimes it gets - not boring, but you just can't take it in, 'cause it all sounds the same.*" It was better, though, than in her old school where "*it was always about Christianity. We never learnt about any other religions.*" The father of a Year 4 Hindu child, commented: "*If you ask her about Indian gods, she may not know anything about them, but if you ask her about the bible she will tell you a good story, even for dates.*" The Sikh mother of a Year 6 pupil observed a similar phenomenon but felt it did not matter. She commented that one of her younger children had come home from school talking a lot about Jesus and God.

I: That's difficult for you?

Mo: No that's fine, they've been brought up that every religion's the same, it doesn't matter how you pray to them, everybody prays differently, it doesn't matter how.

Children as experts on their own faith tradition

Most of the teachers who mentioned the topic placed a high value on the contribution that children themselves can make as experts on their own faith tradition. For example, one teacher contrasted the situation in her previous multi-ethnic school with that in her present one:

...one of the things that I had really enjoyed with my teaching (there) was the fact that I got to learn about so many different cultures, and the children taught other children about it. In subjects like RE this was brilliant. What I did not know I could actually draw upon the children's own knowledge of it and they could talk about what they were experiencing at home. That was the big difference. But of course we still teach all of that here but we don't get so much of the children's input.

However, some opportunities did occur. For example, a Year 6 teacher in the same school arranged a formal staged interview about Islam with a recently arrived Muslim pupil - an event that was then repeated for two other classes. The advantages of such initiatives were seen to include accuracy ("*he knew so much about it*") and immediacy ("*he'd actually experienced it*"). Such initiatives would often also shift perceptions of the informant among his or her peers. For example, a comic follow-up to the video on Islam described earlier was that some of the children, who thought it had been made for TV, asked one of the adult interviewees for his autograph.

There is nothing unusual about drawing on children's direct experiences in such ways. The particular challenge in these schools was that very often the children concerned were unique in their classes or even in the school as potential experts on their faith tradition. Teachers often emphasised that they took care to evaluate children's readiness to take on the role of informant or expert. They did not want to expose them if they were shy or reluctant. But many of the pupils were seen to be keen to play an active part in this context. The Year 6 initiative that was mentioned above began when the boy concerned "*put his hand up to every single thing to explain it. You could see he wasn't shy about his religion. He was proud of it and he wanted to explain it.*" There were children in our sample who were described by their teachers as eager to contribute and others who were seen as reticent on the subject. Equally, while many teachers advocated this approach, some were very cautious about it. The latter can be exemplified by an experienced secondary head of RE:

> *It's a bit of a tricky,...it's an awkward one. I think one of the main reactions you tend to get is a certain amount of embarrassment from the ethnic minority. So if I've got a lad from say, Judaism, a Jewish lad in my class and we are looking at Judaism, in year 7 you tend to get letters from home saying that he would rather not be identified as being Jewish. Or if the other class know about it and we deal with something like kosher food, they tend to say something like, "Is that right, is that something you do? Do you not eat those...?" So you know you have got to be quite sensitive, and if I know that a pupil is from a very seriously committed religious family from whatever background I will sometimes say: "Do you want me to mention the fact that you belong to...?"... So there have been occasions when there has been embarrassment on their part because they feel the eyes of the class are on them. So you have to be quite sensitive to that obviously. On the positive side some of them that have been very up front about it you can kind of.. you know even if it's a simple question of, "Did I pronounce that properly?" you know so that they can have an input in the lesson. But I don't really use them as a resource... You've got to be sensitive and you've got to be careful how to play it really and it's all to do with how they as individuals feel in that set up. The other thing is dispelling any stereotypes. You say, "Well, look Vijay looks Asian, but actually he's from a Christian family." Just making sure that ground rules are established and deal with it in a sensitive and dispel any awkwardness as best you can.*

In some schools parents were used as a resource and contributed to teaching sessions on their own faith. Examples included a Muslim mother who talked about Islam to a class at her children's primary school and a Hindu mother who brought in traditional food on the day of a festival.

School assembly and religious worship

All the schools held regular assemblies, though the amount of worship and the range of religious content varied. Two of the secondary schools that we looked at arranged weekly assemblies for each year group. These meetings did not involve formal worship but would normally include coverage of a religious or moral theme. In one of the schools that theme was circulated to teachers with written materials that could form the basis for tutor group discussion on some of the mornings when the year group did not have assembly. Recent examples had included a Buddhist sentiment, a thought about friendship, and a national news item raising issues about moral responsibility for criminal conduct. Some of the children who were interviewed in the school spontaneously mentioned assembly themes of this kind.

In another secondary school "reflective" assemblies had been supplemented with a weekly period of collective Christian worship which was offered on a voluntary basis. It was run by a teacher who was a committed Christian but was open to anyone in any year group. It was reported that 30 - 50 students attended. The teacher concerned maintained a low profile for this event, relying on word of mouth publicity, as she recognised that what her head of department called "negative vibes" from either students or staff could put off potential participants.

In all the primary schools some assemblies were led by individual classes with a high level of pupil participation. Parents were invited to attend on a regular basis, typically once a week, in almost all of the schools. There was marked variation between schools in the degree to which teachers emphasised the place of worship in assemblies. Some of the head teachers highlighted the role of visiting speakers, e.g. "*local vicars, people from various church groups*", "*a lay person... associated with the local preacher*". Two questions in particular were explored in relation to this project:

- Did assemblies take account of the range of religious faiths represented in society?
- Did some parents withdraw their children from religious assemblies, and if so, on what basis?

Most of the schools made reference to other faith traditions besides Christianity, though it was not universal. Thus a form tutor in one of the secondary schools recalled that during his training year he had taught at a school with a high proportion of Asian students. Ramadan was covered in assembly, staff were made aware of the issues, and a lot of attention was devoted to it. The children were told that it would be going on for some weeks, and not to go up and wave food in front of the faces of those fasting, or '*take the mickey*'. He did not think that would happen in his present mainly white school. This was a school where teachers and pupils agreed that assemblies were not religious and where the possibility of parents withdrawing their children barely arose. Parents of two children noted that the school did nothing to support their religions. Neither expected that it would, and a Sikh father had been surprised and impressed when a teacher approached him during a parents' evening about the possibility of organising a trip to a Gurdhwara for an RE group.

Our informants at another secondary school outlined a different approach. Here major events of a number of faith traditions formed the focus of assemblies at the relevant time of the year. It was generally agreed that this was most successful when led by an individual from the faith concerned. One form tutor reported that during the previous year a week's assemblies had been taken by a Muslim teacher who talked about his own experience of fasting during Ramadan and the reasons for doing so. She recalled it as a very effective strategy:

> *The member of staff, yeah, to... get over to the kids that this is what happens, this is my religion, this is what I do, instead of a white member of staff going in to assembly talking about what other cultures do, it was actually there, in front of them... first hand experience.*

A further perspective on such initiatives was provided by Yaksha, a Year 9 girl from a Hindu background in the same school. She felt negative about the discussion of Hinduism in assembly because:

> *They just gave all the wrong... because they're, like, reading it from a book and they don't really know... I think... they choose a teacher who has to do it all week and they just give them the book and they have to look, look up on it.*

As an example, she talked of the teacher "*making out that all Hindus are, like, supposed to be really strict. You have to do this and you have to do that but it's not really like that.*" They often have an assembly on Hinduism at the time of Diwali. "*It doesn't really bother me anyway, because we go out (at the weekend)... Then there's like a massive celebration... like a massive parade.*" But it did seem to trouble Yaksha that the traditions of her faith were, as she saw it, misrepresented sometimes. This issue will be explored further below.

Almost half of the primary schools made a point of introducing other faith traditions besides Christianity during assemblies. One head teacher commented that, although his was a Church of England foundation school and many children were sent there for this reason, they also had children from a range of religious backgrounds. He tried to acknowledge a variety of religions in assemblies. Class teachers in three separate schools expressed concern that individual children from minority faiths might feel exposed or embarrassed if asked to contribute on such occasions. For example, Raymond's teacher reported:

> *I probably tend to play down Raymond's culture, because he doesn't think that he has a different culture, which he probably doesn't have actually. Um, but if you've got children like I have done, a Hindu child and a Muslim child, who...the Hindu child was very keen to share everything with us. You know, she brought psalms in, she brought her shrine in from home. Her mother came to bring it in for assembly with her and she was very keen that young children learnt about it and she knew I was very keen. So, with her I did let her...you know, share everything she knew because I knew that she was keen to do it.*

The school's RE Co-ordinator recalled a Muslim boy who had been very reluctant to share what he knew in spite of the fact that he was learning Arabic at the Mosque and "*knew more than you thought... more than he could share in the end*". Generally, though, children were interested to contribute in this situation. "*They just bring it more alive and especially when the older children have done it and then they'll ask the older children questions.*"

It was very rare for parents to withdraw their children from assembly. For example, in one primary school the RE co-ordinator reported that "*the only children that I've ever noticed not being in assemblies are the Jehovah Witnesses. They stay out for the hymn, prayer bit and they come in at the end.*" Parents of a very small number of Muslim children withdrew them from the part of assembly devoted to worship in two schools. In general head teachers sought to maximise attendance, but there were important differences in their reasoning on the issue.

A head teacher whose thinking was quoted at the beginning of this part of the chapter aimed to express the school's inclusive philosophy partly by how they dealt with the question of attendance at assembly. He tried to assure parents that, if their child was included in assembly, "*we would never say or do anything in assembly or in school that would be offensive to their ethnic group*". He gave the example of what he called a mix and match arrangement that they had with a Jehovah's Witness family in the school in relation to sex education.

> *We have for some years. We'd never want to do anything that would offend their belief system. And often the family ends up giving us permission to include their children. It's better not to compromise other people's views or religious beliefs, but to make them open to people of other religions, other beliefs.*

For another head the issue was simply one of management:

> *Two children opt out, both Muslim, and only recently. They do actually, interesting. We've managed to work on them. So they actually come to the assembly part but they opt out of the prayers... If we sing songs, we're fine. If we sing a hymn that they're not keen on, which is fair enough. I'm quite happy with that. I mean, we're very lucky. It's something we've worked really hard on, to try and explain to people that the actual assembly for the children is really important.*

She acknowledged that the assembly "*does sometimes touch on the actual spiritual side*" but thought that, as it was "*moralistic*", it would be acceptable to all. The school's RE co-ordinator had a similar view of the process:

> *We have a couple of children who are withdrawn from prayers, that's it... We just say a quick prayer at the end of assembly. And those children just go out and then come back in again for notices and so on.*

We noted that parents of children at this school simply ignored assembly when discussing their view of the school. The school's managerial approach appears to have had the effect of playing down the importance of this aspect of school life for all the stakeholders.

The Head of another primary school did not focus on the attendance issue. She described the school's special Friday assemblies which parents attend as an opportunity to communicate to all a key part of the school's ethos about teaching respect and values. The classes take it in turn and, as there are eight classes, there are eight assemblies per term. She acknowledged that some Christian parents had had initial concerns about an open approach involving other faiths, but she felt that they had been won over after seeing what the children achieved. She gave an example.

> *We had a class assembly on Friday and they'd been doing Christianity and Islam and they'd been to the Mosque and there were some boys reading in Arabic and you know, it's all part of the respect isn't it?... And parents come to those assemblies as well and it's their recognition... ? "Gosh, they know about that, do they?" ... In a positive way, a very positive way. Yes. And just going into a Mosque and finding out about it and presenting in assembly.*

This account was one of a number of examples of how the head teacher's approach to diversity affected everyday life in the school.

Similar values were highlighted by a Buddhist parent whose Year 4 son, Dechen, was attending a Church of England school:

> *We were conscious of the fact that Dechen was the only Asian child in the school that year. It did bother me a bit... What I did tell them was that I do not want him to start praying because he is a Buddhist. But he must attend assembly, and if they go to Church or whatever, then he has to go there because that is their religion and no matter what... And have respect, but doesn't have to do the hymns or don't do your prayers because you can't and then it would be a religious thing. But he will be sitting in the church and standing up and sitting down. Be respectful. That's fine. I have no problems with that. So he will also learn to respect other religions and then they will also think: All right he may be a Buddhist, but he comes to our church and he respects our religion. I mean that's what I would do. That is my natural thing.*

Reviewing the comments of teachers and parents on these issues we noted that it often appeared that some parents had given them a good deal of thought, while the teachers treated them as a relatively minor issue in school life. In an increasingly secular society there is an inevitable divergence between those who are concerned about such matters

and those for whom they have little importance. At the same time it was striking that some form tutors in secondary schools and class teachers in primary schools expressed uncertainty about their school's policy on such fundamental issues as a parent's right to withdraw their child from religious worship in assembly.

Provision for prayer outside assembly

The initiative taken by one secondary school to provide an opportunity for Christian prayer outside assembly was highlighted above. A small number of Muslim informants raised a separate issue that they thought required attention. This was the provision of a prayer room for Muslim children at the secondary stage. Jabir's parents pointed out that using this room solely as a prayer room was unnecessary. The room could have other uses at other times. It could just be a classroom that was not being used for anything else at that time. Sadiq in the same school did not raise this as a request but reported that he catches up at home with daily prayers that have to be missed at school. A form tutor in the school who was herself a practising Muslim commented on the difference between this school and the multi-ethnic town where she had grown up and still lived. Among other things she noted that there are no facilities for Friday lunchtime prayer.

> *There isn't any, there isn't any kind of, they don't treat you differently because of what you are, they just accept you as one of their own. So there isn't any racism in a sense, but they just don't have an understanding of your culture or what you believe in or what you practise.*

Naseema (Year 8) whose advocacy of Islamic issues has been quoted before noted that it was hard to fast and pray during Ramadan. The school does not make any special arrangements.

> *I.. don't think it's not fair, because then the children would miss out on the work, but then it is also important to actually pray but... We don't really get an opportunity to do that at school.*

There is no room set aside for the purpose. "*But I pray during evenings, if I can.*" The interviewer invited her to comment further.

> *I think it, it is, it's, it's a good school and they, I think they do try their hardest, but it is hard. Harder for them to allow children, Muslims, to go in separate rooms and pray, 'cause the other children would just say, "How come they get to go?" And most children don't really understand that. They're very, they don't really want to understand.*

Schools' responses to non-Christian religious requirements of pupils and staff

When the pupils and parents whom we interviewed came from a Muslim, Hindu or Sikh background, they often indicated a concern that pupils should be able to follow religious rules about diet and modesty at school. In the case of the dietary rules very few problems were reported, mainly because the vegetarian options that were available for many others could meet the needs of this group too. There were calls for more variety and for more consistent warnings of the meat content of all dishes. But these were just one or two voices in an otherwise entirely positive response. The general perception seemed to be that teachers and support staff broadly appreciated the main dietary rules of the major religions and that sufficient provision was made for pupils to follow them, even in schools with very few pupils who needed to do so. No child reported that they felt

embarrassed to ask about food that was served. The father of a Hindu girl in Year 4 pointed out that she had friends who were vegetarian, so there was nothing to feel embarrassed about.

Two of our Muslim informants, one a teacher and the other a teaching assistant, had come to work in mainly white schools after being on the staff of establishments that had a more substantial ethnic mix. They both felt that there was rather little understanding of their needs or those of the pupils regarding fasting during Ramadan or major religious festivals such as Eid. Similarly some secondary age girls and their parents felt that they had had to battle to have concerns about rules of dress understood.

9.3 Overview of findings

Religious education

1. In this sample of schools the Religious Education curriculum reflected the diversity of contemporary society more fully than any other aspect of the school curriculum.

2. Pupils and parents responded positively both to teaching about their own religion and to the opportunities that were given for children to learn about other faith traditions.

3. In some settings children who were interested to do so had made an effective contribution to classroom work on their own faith when they were usually the only individuals in a position to be able to do this from direct experience. In the context of these schools, when managed sensitively, this appeared to have positive effects both on their own self-esteem and on other children's appreciation of their distinctive cultural background.

School assembly

4. All the schools held regular assemblies, though the amount of worship and the range of religious content varied. Most of the schools, including one of the voluntary aided church schools, focused on other faith traditions besides Christianity in some assemblies, though this was not universal. When this happened, minority ethnic pupils from the tradition concerned were more likely to value the event highly if it was led by a staff member or visitor speaking from first hand experience of that faith community.

5. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from a religious assembly if they wish. Head teachers tended to discourage this, and it was rare for parents to exercise that right. Some of those supporting their children's attendance justified their stance in terms that were similar to the arguments presented by some head teachers to justify non-Christian assemblies - a wish to help the children learn to understand and respect others' beliefs.

Schools' responses to non-Christian religious requirements of pupils and staff

6. Parents and pupils reported no problems in following religious dietary rules at school, but in some settings they would have appreciated greater understanding and sensitivity regarding dress code traditions and modesty relating to girls.

7. None of the secondary schools made provision for prayer outside assembly - an initiative that would have been appreciated by a small minority of Muslim pupils and teachers.

Chapter 10 Language issues at school

Summary

The research questions addressed in this section are:

- How do teachers in the schools view the language education of children and young people from minority ethnic groups who are learning English as an additional language (EAL)?
- To what extent do curricula, school ethos and classroom practices take account of the diversity of languages in society as a whole and meet the needs and interests of all children in the schools, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds who are learning EAL?

The principal findings reported here are:

- Few of the schools had admitted many pupils in recent years who had needed additional support because they were learning EAL. Teaching provision varied markedly in those schools which did need it with some reliance on ad hoc arrangements and on staff with expertise in special educational needs. But there were also examples of schools making effective use of advice and support from LEA specialist teaching services.
- While some primary schools operated a "language across the curriculum" strategy, no school had a strategy in place for supporting children learning EAL beyond the initial stages. The longer term language development needs of such pupils were not given attention by the teachers who spoke with us, and none described strategies for supporting and enhancing their proficiency and confidence in using English for academic purposes.

10.1 Introduction

As we reported in Chapter 6, nearly half of the children in the sample lived in households in which English was not the only or the dominant language. They were all attending schools in which English was the sole medium of instruction and in which other speakers of their community languages were, at best, rare. This chapter focuses on the language issues that were of most immediate concern in that context - the provision that was made for teaching children with English as an additional language (EAL) whose proficiency was most limited. It is possible to make effective provision at local authority and school level for support within mainly white schools, but a review of support for the attainment of minority ethnic pupils indicated considerable variation between authorities (Ofsted, 2001). Inspectors expressed concern that some LEAs had taken "insufficient action, within a largely mono-cultural context, to meet the needs of isolated pupils from minority ethnic groups" (para. 32). To what degree had the schools in our sample shown the "breadth of vision" that Ofsted argued was needed, and what particular strategies had been adopted by the schools that had succeeded in this task?

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In the time available for our visits to the schools it was not possible to investigate some broader issues that we recognised could be having a considerable influence on the children's ultimate educational achievements. We could not, for example, attempt to identify schools' strategies for fostering the later development of oral and written language skills in the support of advanced curriculum goals. We were aware that, in at least one of the primary schools (one which had a high record of high achievement in SATs), all work on language took place within the context of a broad-based and carefully thought through English policy in which speaking and listening had some priority. It may well be that an approach of that kind has a particular value for pupils who are learning EAL in a mainly white setting. But it was not possible for us to broaden the research interview framework to explore that question. Similarly, we could not follow up the observation made by senior staff in two of the schools that the training that was being given in support of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies was having a positive impact on staff awareness of language issues more generally. We recognise that there are important language issues for minority ethnic pupils in mainly white schools that are not covered below, e.g. the impact of school cross-curricular language policies. We have concentrated here on the ways in which the schools met the needs of a subset of the sample - those learning EAL.

10.2 Observations made by children, parents and teachers

In most of the schools, experienced staff whom we interviewed recalled very few or no pupils in recent years who had needed additional support because they were learning EAL. When we reviewed the interview records we found that this was the case in ten of the fourteen schools. The exceptions fell into two categories:

- Two primary schools in the London area reported a significant increase in the previous year or eighteen months, comprising mainly refugees and asylum seekers but also the children of health service workers recruited to fill vacancies in local hospitals.
- The other two schools each had an industrial facility nearby which attracted overseas staff who came to work there for limited periods and placed their children in local schools while in the UK.

Table 10.1 Comments by head teachers and senior staff on EAL teaching needs in their schools
Head of Maths in a secondary school: *Um, well I think because everybody I've seen speaks English very well indeed, and were presumably born in this country, so that has no different effect upon them as it would to, to the Caucasian. In other words, I mean, their English is perfect anyway, and they're as English as anybody else.*
Head Teacher of a secondary school near a Japanese-owned manufacturing facility: *We tend to find that the major difficulty with regards to English as a second language is from the children who are over here for a short period time... I think that because we do focus a lot on oral work with the school that this encourages them to use the language. There is not a huge English as a second language issue within the school... The use of language is not a problem. There are far more, what I would call white children, who are in need of a language support than there are of ethnic minority children.*

Head Teacher who had been in post for five years: *There is no EAL teaching and support here as there have been no pupils who required it. But there is a well-developed system for assessing the needs of new entrants, which would include support for EAL. I cannot recall a pupil needing support for EAL during my time. If it were necessary, we would call on support from the LEA.*
Secondary school deputy head: *...we've had very little, uh English background, additional language children come here.*
The Head Teacher of one primary school contrasted the last term and a half when they had admitted a number of children who were learning EAL with the previous six years when there were only a few, each staying only for a short time, not longer than three terms: *Um, it also, with the small numbers (i.e. of pupils learning EAL) we get odd languages and odd needs of pupils. So you can't build up any major stocks in any major language in the library... and that's a problem... I mean we hadn't had any EAL children in our school for, oh, at least six years... The longest someone's been here was three terms. The rest we've had within the last term and a half. They had no English, none at all... One child speaks English... as well as we do. But the others were mainly refugees and mainly non-English speaking.*
Primary school head teacher: With one exception *"we haven't had any children who haven't come in here reasonably fluent".*
Primary school deputy head teacher: *I: Can you take me through what would happen for a child coming into school who didn't have English. A new immigrant. What would be the process at this school?* *T: It hasn't happened but... Section 11 teacher support which we have never needed. In my friend's school they have got loads of Section 11 staff because they have a lot of refugees with no English at all. We have never had that in (this school).*

Against this background it is perhaps not surprising that form tutors and class teachers in most of the schools were unsure what would be done to help a child learning EAL if they had one. For example, the form tutor who was working with Karamdeep (Year 8) replied to a question about what should be said in a handbook of guidance for staff about working with minority ethnic pupils in their school:

> *Don't treat them any differently, because they're not any different. We haven't had one where there's been a language problem, or anything like that, so how this school would deal with that, I don't know.*

Some children simply assumed that it was not the role of the school to teach English to a new arrival. For example, when Maha (Year 7) was asked to suggest advice for a child arriving in her school from Pakistan, she said:

> *M: I'd advise her to, well, if she's got, like, another friend that she could teach her some English or if she goes to, maybe, a private school, she might, um, she, another teacher, where she could learn English properly. Because people might make fun of her, and that isn't good.*
>
> *I: Right. So she couldn't learn English here, in this school?*
>
> *M: She might, someone might, some of her friends, if she makes any, might teach her, but I'm not sure.*
>
> *I: Right. You feel it could be hard?*
>
> *M: Yeah.*

Her suggestions can be seen in the context of an observation by a senior teacher in her school:

I can't, in all my time here, I can't honestly remember anybody coming in from a specialist teaching service. Maybe once, because in J (nearest town) there is, um, a community centre, where they have specialists.

Within the sample there were schools that had needed to develop strategies for organising EAL teaching because they did have some entrants who needed it. None of the schools received delegated EMAG funding, but schools that had needed to do so had sought support from a specialist teaching service organised by the LEA. This had generally come in the form of advice, though in some cases a visiting teacher had provided short-term teaching support, including demonstration teaching to help a non-specialist teacher or a teaching assistant to see what might be possible with a particular child. Although we heard occasional criticisms of the advice or support that had been given (sometimes where there was disagreement on language teaching methods), in general, teachers' comments were positive. We noted, however, that two of the schools which might have benefited from drawing on additional advice or support from their LEA had not done so. The teachers' observations about the uses they had made of external services are illustrated in Table 10.2.

Table 10.2 Help with EAL teaching from outside the school's resources

The head teacher of a secondary school near a Japanese-owned manufacturing facility:
If there is English as second language, for example Japanese children, we bring support staff in (i.e. from the local EMAG service). This is in order to work with them, we have got a close working relationship with (the company) to operate the Saturday schools. They are there to offer support to the children on a Saturday... The children themselves are an additional ladder of support... We tend to find that the major difficulty with regards to English as a second language is from the children who are over here for a short period of time... If there is a child with no English at all, therefore, that teacher operates with them for a percentage of the week, but the child is then immersed... We don't have additional support other than on those specific occasions when we are able to supply the Japanese teacher support.

The special educational needs co-ordinator in the school:
Well, if they come in with no or very little English, then we contact EMAG straight away, e.g. for L... two terms she has support. If they're stage 1 language learners, depending on the number of students in the city needing access, it'll begin to decline after that. It's a case of getting them going.

Primary school head teacher on their only recent admission of a pupil needing EAL help:
T: I approached the Section 11 people immediately for advice, and for strategies I might make, and really there wasn't any specific advice, except in her case to treat her as meeting her special needs, and her needs were her reading and writing facility.
I: And she joined the SEN group within your targeting group system?
T: Yes, for a very short time.
I: And the EMAG service didn't provide anything?
T: I asked them to come out and talk to me and they did... I needed to be sure I shouldn't be bringing in an Egyptian linguist. The advice was for my confidence, to make sure I was doing the best I could in the circumstances. If they'd said, "you'll have to provide language support for a period of time", we'd have done it somehow, perhaps the child's mother.

A primary school SEN co-ordinator observed:
These (i.e. the pupils with a little English) are the children that really slip through the net. I rang EMAG about D (a Cantonese speaker) and told them the problem. He was good at writing but couldn't get the idea of tenses. Apparently in his language there are no tenses. So I phoned EMAG, because I remember when I learned German all the different tenses that are not in English, we have to learn some more tenses. They said I hadn't got the right attitude to teaching pupils with a second language, and he would learn by osmosis from the world around him. And I said, "He's not learning by osmosis, there must be a grammar book." If I went to

W.H. Smith in Hong Kong, I could get one, and that was what I needed, because it wasn't coming by osmosis. I did my best, I asked my friend in Germany to send something from there about English tenses. I was just trying to help with the boy's problems. So he wouldn't fail GCSE English like his older brother did. I'm not long in the tooth, but I've been teaching 17 years, and I wouldn't ask them again.
A secondary school SEN co-ordinator: *We can call someone in from the Education Authority to give advice and/or do an assessment on a newly arrived child. We did that with a lad from Singapore... Most of the resources tend to go in to Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The advice is there, but the resources aren't, not at secondary school - well, perhaps not at this secondary school. I would imagine that schools in the area with more ethnic minorities get more.*

The most common framework for organising EAL teaching and support was through co-ordinators or departments of special educational needs. When senior staff explained this, they often emphasised that this arrangement of convenience was not intended to imply that they thought children learning EAL have special educational needs. Some of the schools in the sample admitted pupils in the early stages of learning English so rarely that they made ad hoc arrangements when this happened.

Table 10.3 Organisation of EAL teaching within the school
A primary school head teacher replying to a question about the use of classroom assistants who mainly work with poor readers to teach EAL with new arrivals: *Yes, they usually work with very basic learners. And though these aren't, some of the facilities can be adapted for them. I'm not implying on your tape that they're thick or we think they're all thick... It does help with differentiation. It also gives them more time on their own as individuals, which the class teacher can't always give... That's what we've used it for... What I didn't want you to go away with, because a lot of people would say that we think they're thick and we're not doing enough for them. But that isn't the case really. We're just trying to use our expertise.*
A primary school head teacher: *We have a teacher who comes in for four mornings a week and she works really in each class and she gives each class the same amount of time and then, she'll support particular children in that class. Um, but the big thing and I think is general in schools is the huge difference that it makes having an increasing number of teaching assistants. I mean, three years ago, we had two teaching assistants. We have six now and they do wonderful work. And I think some of the initiatives being brought in are really worth it. Training for classroom assistants. And then they support children. It's very well structured...I think it's particularly beneficial to children with English as a second language if they have actually reached a stage where they can actually cope with it. But I think that a lot of the initiatives and extra adults in the class are making a difference.*
The deputy head of a secondary school: *I: Okay, if I can come on to aspects of EAL teaching support.* *T: They would be very individual.* *I: Yes. You, you spoke, when we just referred to it before, about there being a new Russian boy.* *T: Right. Um, a new Russian lad arrived in Year 10, spoke some English, um, very difficult to find a Russian interpreter around here! But we do have a student in the sixth form, who... (had) decided to learn Russian... So, we actually asked her if she would mind mentoring and looking after S and she's done a really good job, and they get on like a house on fire. And, uh, it's that sort of thing that happens.*

A Year 6 class teacher: *I: If you were to have a pupil who was struggling with English, what measures would be taken?* *T: The special needs co-ordinator would be involved from the start. The language support would be sought if that was necessary.*
Special educational needs co-ordinator in a secondary school: *Other ethnic minority pupils who come with language issues... as long as they're happy with their English while they're in school, they operate like everybody else. If the bilingualism is impacting on them in school, the SENCo becomes involved.*
Special educational needs co-ordinator in a secondary school: *So I do all the organisation, and if it's possible to swap them onto my timetable. I've worked with L for six months. If I can't they would go to one of my colleagues.*

Thus the schools generally appeared to have developed ad hoc strategies for organising EAL teaching. There was no firm evidence that major problems arose from relying on SENCo's without redefining their role or arranging for them to have additional training. However, as only one or two of the children in our sample were being helped in this way, we were not in a position to evaluate the impact of such strategies effectively. Airisu (Year 8), who had arrived not long before from Japan said that she would have found the extra support she received in some lessons more helpful if the support assistant could have interpreted Japanese. Naseema, who was also now in Year 8, recalled with anger what happened when she moved from infants to junior school five years earlier:

N: In my Junior school, um, when I was in Year Three, I went in. It was a new year and, um, my new teacher took me to a, she took me to this little cabin which was actually in the school. Like a little place for Special Needs, I think... And, um, there was two other Asian girls in there. And I didn't know why I was in there, 'cause I'd been pulled out of class. And she took me there and this lady sat me down and she was talking to me, and these two other girls were doing some other work. They're, they're actually in this school now. And she was asking me really dumb, if you like, questions, which I knew the answers to. But I don't, I could tell in her face she didn't expect me to know. Like, she pointed to a picture of a car and she asked "Do you know what this is" and I said "Yes, it's a vehicle, which allows you to take you to places". And this look on her face to see, to actually hear me say that, it was a bit, "How come she said that, maybe she's a bit, maybe she actually knows something-". I don't think they really actually think that you can speak very good English, or you have a wide vocabulary, or you, I don't think they really understand that.

I: ... they were assuming when you first went to junior school... that you were an Asian girl who didn't speak much English?

N: Yes... Yeah, that's, and I told my mum and she said "That's just how things are and you can't change that". I was, I was slightly offended, 'cause I thought it's just the worksheets they gave me. 'Cause, I had them finished before the other girls did, which was a bit strange, 'cause they were in Year Five and Six and I was in Year Three, and I'd finished it before them. And the girl, and the, like, the teacher was just gobsmacked, basically. She didn't understand how I'd done it or, when I'd asked for extra work, because I was getting bored...

I think that they think 'cause you're, like, your relatives are, like, from, like, countries, which aren't very developed and they, they don't have, like, manners, or they're not very, they're not very social and they just keep to themselves. And I don't, and they just think 'cause you're Asian, you're not going to know.

No other child told us of an incident of this kind, and Naseema was keen to make clear that she did not think it would have happened in her current school.

Many children and teachers spoke positively of the work that support assistants had done with children learning EAL. For example, a history teacher described the support given by a learning support assistant to a recently arrived Japanese boy in one of his classes:

> *He has a learning support assistant with him to help him, every (history) lesson. He's got individual support from the learning support assistant... and he has come on in leaps and bounds. He can actually, his English has improved a great deal in communicating information or better to people. I mean he's got a little computer thing that translates English to Japanese... I mean, obviously it would be better if you could get a support assistant who was Japanese who could speak English in an ideal world. But we're not in an ideal world, but he's done very well by her, and he has one to one support and he's not the centre of attention or anything else.*

The schools' typical arrangements for organising EAL teaching were illustrated in Table 10.3. One school stood out as having developed a more systematic strategy than the others. It had admitted more children in the early stages of learning EAL in the recent past than previously, and this shift in admissions had coincided with the arrival of a new head teacher who was committed to reviewing many aspects of the organisation of the school. The arrangements they developed are outlined in a case study below.

Case study The organisation of EAL teaching in a primary school

The school had recently admitted more children learning EAL than in the past. An experienced member of staff had been given the role of co-ordinating EAL teaching. Her responsibility was primarily to organise the timetable of support and to supervise the acquisition of appropriate resources. Her full-time teaching role was with a class and not with children learning EAL. She had no previous experience in this field but had attended meetings of EAL co-ordinators with an LEA adviser which she described as "*not really training courses, more information courses*".

The direct teaching and in-class support was undertaken by two of the school's teaching assistants, part of whose time was allocated for this purpose when needed. (Most of the time they were involved in Additional Literacy Support, and they also undertook dinner time supervision.) With the children learning EAL they worked within a framework set by an LEA specialist teacher who would visit to assess any children who had recently arrived in the country. One of the assistants described the process thus:

"...with new arrivals, first of all they are assessed. Maggie [from LEA specialist teaching service] comes in and works with them initially and then in their first or second week we will work with her. She will assess them, see what she wants to achieve with them, and we work alongside her maybe just for one session and then it is alternated so that they have double the time out. She will pass on resources and we will carry on her work. We can see what the child has done and usually catch up with her at any time when she's in the school, if I have a problem or if I think – "Can I help by doing that?" I am always able to ask if I feel the child needs to go in a different direction as well."

Support for a different purpose was described by the other assistant:

I liaise with the teacher in Year 6. So they were doing a lot of practices due to the SATs. So I was doing a lot more vocabulary work and dictionary work and helping her through a lot more of the assessing part

.

Since the SATs she has not been working with that child so much.

We are continuing but because we were short staffed I had to go in the office and do other tasks. So it happened to be the times when I was doing her.

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The Deputy Head described the process for newly arrived children:
There will be some informal assessment that goes on with the child because the class teacher needs to know where they have got to be slotted in or how much provision will be needed. Certain children who have very little language acquisition would be allocated some time with class room assistants. Their role is to look at the vocabulary that they use day to day with the children. Other children who are operating at perhaps a higher level of language acquisition, they would need key words and key vocabulary is very important at this stage. I know we have been trying to get dual language dictionaries as well. We do have some dual language books in the library. The library is being audited at the moment. Finding out what the children's experiences have been so far because they can be very wide ranging. We have had some pupils who have had lots of education in which every school they have come from and they are actually pretty with it and they are a little bit more than we have actually got to. It is getting that key vocabulary in. Whereas we have had other children who need to be socialised into the way of school life. It is very much individual: what does this child need?

We were told of very little work in the schools that drew on the children's knowledge of a community language. There was widespread recognition of the potential of such work to enrich the curriculum and to help children to grasp concepts they find difficult, but the schools rarely had the staff expertise to offer these advantages (see Chapter 11). In general, any systematic work designed to maintain and extend the use of community language took place in the community (see Chapter 6). One exception was one of the secondary schools with a regular intake of Japanese children whose fathers were working locally. Some staff had learned a little Japanese, and there had been an impact on other pupils too. The head teacher reported:

> *I: And is there anything in terms of positive encouragement of mother tongue?*
> *T: Yes there is. Where possible youngsters are grouped together, for example the two who have come today, we will try, it just happens to work, are placed in tutor groups with other Japanese pupils. So not only mother tongue, you will see children in the school learning the language as well. They pick up words from their friends, and begin to use the odd word...*

In two schools in the sample (one primary and one secondary) there were units to support children with hearing impairment in ordinary classes. When staff at all levels discussed language issues in these two schools, they often made connections between their understanding of the needs of children learning EAL and what they knew about communication problems as a result of working with children with hearing impairment. This chapter closes with extracts from interviews that serve to illustrate that point and also to emphasise how teachers generally in the schools tended to locate the language difficulties of those learning EAL in the broader and more familiar context of general problems of language acquisition in childhood.

Table 10.4 How class and subject teachers contextualised their support for the language development of children learning EAL

Mathematics co-ordinator in a primary school with a unit for children with hearing impairment:
T: ...actually, we are all very aware. It is not just with the minority groups. It is the fact that with the special needs children and things like that is that language enrichment is so important and the fact that this is something we are tackling because we have realised that it is the same for all.
I: Could you say a bit more about that?
T: Well the children all need to be able to access the curriculum. So it is working with an emphasis on language and actually showing the words and discussing it with them and showing as I said within the

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context of the language, so actually putting it with a practical activity so that the children can relate to it. I think that benefits all. I mean those children who are perhaps lower ability, those children who have English as a second language, or of course those children with hearing impairments because they need to visualise it. With a lot of...the maths words are very difficult for them to lip read or sign. Visualising it helps.

The head teacher of a secondary school with a unit for children with hearing impairment:
And the other second language is that we are a special facility for the hearing impaired, with signing as a second language, which is much more of a second language need than it is for the majority of pupils in school. We have special communicators, and have to employ additional staff. So whereas you might find in a city school that there is language support for ethnic minority children, we don't identify that as being an issue here. But there is certainly support required for the signing... A lot of children in the school have learned to sign and you'll see them communicating together... We do focus a lot on oral development in the school. There isn't a huge EAL issue in the school. The use of language isn't a problem. There are far more white children who are in need of language support as there are ethnic minority children, and that's to do with their social needs...

The head of English in a secondary school:
We don't have in place an actual whole school speaking and listening policy, but because of the introduction of the literacy strategy, there's been a raising of awareness of language needs generally and we've had whole school inset from the literacy co-ordinators talking about the need to focus on other curriculum areas and I think this is spinning off. I observed just recently a physics lesson and saw there a teacher who was working with a group of fairly low ability pupils... And he was quite clearly negotiating language, introducing them to words as he went along and was clearly very conscious of the fact that he was using words and concepts that had to be negotiated. I'm sure the National Literacy Strategy's going to make a big difference in terms of formalising this.

Some parents would have welcomed a greater emphasis on continued language work after children had moved beyond the earliest stages of English language acquisition. For example, Srimad's mother had been told by teachers at the Year 8 parents' evening that he was clearly bright enough to have got into grammar school. He had missed the borderline in the local 11+ tests by only two marks. She felt that being bilingual in Gujerati and English had been a disadvantage to him, as part of the tests involved language. The parents had appealed, but their appeal was turned down.

Sabirah (Year 8) had been born in Iraq and started school here in Year 5. The parents speak in Arabic at home, and Sabirah speaks Arabic, though she will often respond in English at home, as her younger sister does. Commenting on the children's educational achievements, her father said:

> *For my kids, I don't think the academic success of the school will make a difference - because they are poor in English they will not have a good grade. Not because they're dumb, but they need extra time (in exams, e.g.) to understand what's being asked of them. They get maybe half an hour additional support, but it's not enough for them. English kids read something once and understand it. My kids have to read it three or four times before they understand it - or they can't read it...*

At the end of the interview he was invited to highlight what he thought was most important of all the things that had been discussed.

> *The most important things are swimming and sex education, and the fact that they are disadvantaged because of their lack of English compared to other students. Their grades will be lower, not because they're dumb, but because of language. Sabirah's English is at a year 7 level, or year 6. L, in Iraq, was always A*. Why not here?*

There's something wrong. Their oral language is good, and improving rapidly, but written language not so good.

In the following case study we illustrate how one primary teacher perceived these issues in relation to a Year 6 child who had some learning difficulties.

Case study	A primary teacher's account of the learning difficulties of one pupil learning EAL

May was a very experienced teacher. She has been in the profession for more than 25 years and in Aarif's primary school for about five years. In the past she worked in culturally and linguistically diverse schools. The extracts below from her interview firstly illustrate her struggle to make sense of Aarif's performance. So, at the same time that she described him as "*poor anyway*" and attributed this to "*low intelligence*". She attributed his academic difficulties to "*not getting the backup to help him*" at home.

I: So, how is he doing academically?

A: Well, academically, he would be poor anyway, regardless of his race. Um, I believe he has got low intelligence. The problem of not being English is just making it worse for him. So he is struggling. He is definitely in the bottom group. His big problems really are when he takes homework home, he is not getting the backup to help him. The one who can help him is dad, who seems to be able to speak English, but he is often out or you know, he doesn't come home from business till late on. So, he doesn't get much help with his homework. There is a lot of help needed with his reading. Now, he can technically read the words, but he is not understanding.

In the teacher's view, Aarif's major learning difficulty was associated with comprehension of written English.

I: Not understood what he has read?

T: He won't have got the context of the story at all. And that obviously has a knock on effect when it comes to comprehension. Spelling is poor. Grammar is poor. The actual putting together of a sentence is difficult.

I: So English is an issue.

T: I'm not necessarily saying that it is a language thing because he speaks very good English, but it is the subject of English...writing, comprehension. But as I say, the understanding is not there, neither is the Maths there, or the Science and I don't really think it is just language. I think he would be a low achiever anyway...If you were to put him back in his own country, I think that you would find that he is down low in the class anyway.

In spite of the strong belief that Aarif's problems were linked to his intelligence the teacher also seemed to believe that more help from the family could make a difference. The extract below illustrates the various difficulties she encountered in trying to communicate with them. Firstly, she believed that his father could help, but she did not meet him. Secondly, his mother was very keen to come to the school (in this the teacher confirmed what the mother said to us), but the interpreter was the child. Finally, she mentioned that an interpreter was available, but for a limited number of pupils.

I: His father would be able to help, had he the time?

T: Yes, but his father might not be willing to help. I mean, sometimes, they do not think it is their role actually.

I: What is your impression of his parents as far as you can tell?

T: I don't think that I have met the father at all...It's only the mother that comes to the parents evenings and of course it will be Aarif who will be translating. So, I don't know what is being passed over.

I: And that's actually quite difficult having Aarif there...?

T: Absolutely. It is really very difficult because I can't really say what I want to say. He is not a naughty child at all, certainly in behaviour terms, but the lack of understanding...I really want to put that across to the parent as well as I can and you know, the mother...

I: Is there any way that you think you could get around that because that really is quite a problem...?

T: I can't see a way of getting around the problem. We've tried to do it through older brothers and sisters, but I think that they are teenagers and trying to get them to come in...it really is hard. They don't want to know, do they?...It is hard. So, I don't know a way around it. I mean we have got

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somebody in county who can do translation, but you have got one person for x amount of pupils. She's just not always available. So, it is a big problem.
I: Yeah. Yeah. And it is not necessarily an issue to do with his ethnicity ... it's a level that he's at?
T: Yes. But I think if we had an English speaking mum, he would be higher than he is, because then she would be able to sit there and help him to understand the story a bit better and he's not getting any of that.

The fact that Aarif's mum was not "an English speaking mum" was not changeable. So, the researcher tried to find out what the school did to help the child. This questioning resulted in an answer we also heard from another teacher, i.e., the child was not poor enough for special needs help and could only benefit from standard classroom help provided for all (We learned from his mother that this helper was in fact on long term leave!).
I: Does he have extra help at all?
T: Well he's at a level that is not poor enough to need special help, but what I tend to do is sometimes my classroom assistant will help and I'll get them to sit with him as he reads his book and I'll get them to get him to talk about the story. Instead of just letting him read it, they actually discuss it with him.

It will be evident that in this case study the teacher's analysis is based on a set of assumptions about the family which she has not been able to test and that the family's efforts to support their child at school have not been successful. Strategies that schools used to overcome the barriers to effective home-school communication in these situations will be discussed in chapter ten. In the context of this chapter we should note that a number of parents expressed concern about the ability of their children to show what they were capable of academically when they were working in their second language. For example, Srimad's mother believed that the inclusion of a language test in the 11+ assessment battery was a key reason why her son failed to earn the place in a grammar school which his teachers agreed he deserved.

10.3 Overview of findings

1. Experienced staff in ten of the fourteen schools could recall very few or no pupils in recent years who had needed additional support because they were learning English as an additional language. Two of the exceptions were primary schools in the London area where there had been a noticeable increase recently. The other two schools each had an industrial facility nearby which attracted overseas staff who came to work for limited periods placing their children in local schools.

2. As would be expected, none of the schools received delegated EMAG funding to support the teaching of English as an additional language in the early stages. Key staff in most of the schools that had needed to do so had felt that they could call on advice from a specialist teaching service organised by the LEA (with, in some cases, short-term teaching support). There was criticism of the support that had been given in one of the schools, but in general it appeared that the arrangements that were intended to offer support in these circumstances had made a significant contribution. Even so, two schools had not turned to the LEA for additional advice or support when it seemed that they might have benefited from it.

3. In one school the head had asked a member of staff to coordinate EAL teaching. When needed, part of the time of two teaching assistants was allocated to EAL support. They worked within a framework set by a visiting LEA specialist teacher

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when children had recently arrived in the country and with advice from the class teachers and the school's EAL co-ordinator when they were more advanced. When EAL teaching or support was needed in the other schools, they made ad hoc arrangements or, more commonly, drew on staff with SEN expertise (sometimes with LEA EMAG support). Senior staff were sometimes embarrassed about such arrangements, appreciating that they could be taken to imply a confused perception that the children had SEN. While most of the children who had received such help spoke positively about it, a minority saw their school as unable to meet the needs of children learning EAL, and one described her previous school as demeaning new arrivals by treating them as "stupid".

4. Some primary schools had an explicit whole school policy on language across the curriculum that was designed to address the needs of all pupils. Many staff then viewed the development of EAL in the context of that policy without seeing the needs of this group of pupils as distinct from those of their White British pupils with weak language skills. No school had a strategy in place for supporting children learning EAL beyond the initial stages. The longer term language development needs of such pupils were not given attention by the teachers who spoke with us, and none described strategies for supporting and enhancing their proficiency and confidence in using English for academic purposes. In some schools, including at least one secondary school, work on planning the implementation of the National Literacy or Numeracy Strategies was seen by senior staff as a helpful lever for requiring whole school attention to these issues.

5. No child reported that they used their home language in the classroom, but a proportion of those who spoke a language other than English were attending community classes designed to enhance their proficiency. One secondary school arranged for pupils to take GCSE in a community language after community-based tuition.

Chapter 11 Teachers

Summary

The research questions addressed in this section are:

- What experience and training do teachers in the schools have for work with children and young people from minority ethnic groups? Are there areas of knowledge, competencies and resources that they perceive as essential but feel they do not have?
- What contribution is made by minority ethnic staff to the work of the schools?

The principal findings reported here are:

- The mainly white pupil population of the schools was served by an almost entirely white teaching staff. Across the 14 schools in the sample there were only three minority ethnic teachers at the time of the study. A number of head teachers and other staff argued that there would be many advantages to their school in having teachers from a wider range of cultural backgrounds on the staff.
- Very few of the teachers whom we interviewed spoke with knowledge or confidence about issues relating to multicultural education. Those who did had usually had experience in a school in a multiethnic area in the past, but more than a third had very little or no such experience to draw on.
- There was no evidence that either initial training or in-service training had prepared the staff of the schools for the challenges of diversity that they can expect to meet with increasing frequency in the future. Very few of the teachers reported that they had attended recent courses or staff development programmes that covered these issues. The focus of a large proportion of recent staff development had been central government initiatives and curriculum/syllabus change.

11.1 Introduction

Nearly twenty years ago Taylor (1984) pointed out that teachers who wished to develop multicultural education in white areas would have to overcome the argument that there was no local parental demand for it and no immediate communal need. A decade later Gaine (1995) rehearsed a number of reasons why teachers in mainly white schools might feel justified in avoiding difficult issues associated with racism:

- Those who have not examined their own preconceptions about "race", prejudice, etc. will not be sensitive to implicitly racist comments by pupils and others.
- Dealing with race-related issues in school takes one into difficult and sensitive territory and may make matters worse.
- It is no business of the school to go into controversial issues of this sort.
- Pupils do not express racist attitudes in the hearing of their teachers.
- Individual minority ethnic children get on all right.

More recent work in multiethnic schools has shown that teachers' interactions with minority ethnic pupils appears sometimes to be determined by stereotyped perceptions of particular groups such as Black Caribbean boys (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996, Section 4.2). It has also been shown that teachers in some multiethnic early years classrooms tend to

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prioritise children's social, as opposed to their cultural, development (Woods et al, 1999). In this chapter we attempt to address questions about teachers' experience, if any, of working with minority ethnic pupils before coming to mainly white schools. We examine the knowledge they showed of their pupils' backgrounds and the evaluative comments that children and parents made about them.

It has been argued that the presence of minority ethnic staff in a multiethnic school, especially teachers, serves a number of purposes. Among other things they can affirm a positive sense of identity among minority ethnic children, be role models, and act, by their very presence, as a check on fair practices in the school (Blair and Bourne, 1998, p. 162). It appears that minority ethnic teachers are mostly employed in schools with a substantial population of minority ethnic pupils (Ranger, 1988; Ghuman, 1995). There have been a small number of case studies of minority ethnic teachers in U.K. schools, and these have mostly been carried out in areas with a relatively high proportion of minority ethnic pupils (Brar, 1991; Callendar, 1997, Blair and Bourne, 1998). As part of our general study of teaching staff we aimed to learn how many minority ethnic teachers were employed in the case study schools and to find out how they were perceived by other staff and by parents and children.

11.2 Observations made by children, parents and teachers

Teachers' experience of working with minority ethnic pupils

In the course of our visits to the schools in the sample we interviewed 77 teachers. Three were supply teachers who happened to be responsible for a pupil in the project sample at the time of the visit. All the others were on the permanent staff of the school where they were working. This meant that, by definition, they were not meeting many minority ethnic pupils in their current posts. Many of them had taught in their present schools for more than ten years, so that any experience they might have had previously in a multi-ethnic setting was now very distant. Across the staff groups as a whole more than a third of those who were interviewed reported that, in fact, they had had very little or no experience with minority ethnic pupils during their training or in previous schools where they had worked.

Table 11.1 Experience of teaching minority ethnic pupils of teachers in two schools
A secondary school in a small town had exceptionally stable staffing. Four of the seven teachers we interviewed had taught there for over 20 years and one for over ten years. Three of this group had had little or no experience of teaching minority ethnic pupils previously, one had spent some time teaching in Africa and one had done some teaching in a multiethnic city. One of the other teachers had come to the school three years earlier immediately after training. She had had a teaching practice in a multiethnic town during her training year. Finally, a newly qualified teacher who had been in the school for just over a year had a Muslim background and had lived almost all his life in a multiethnic area of London. His main teaching practice placement had been in that school.
In a primary school in a similar area in another county three of the five teachers we interviewed had had little or no experience of working with minority ethnic pupils throughout their careers. Two had had some previous experience in multiethnic urban or suburban areas (one during her training year and one over an extended period in different posts in a metropolitan area). However, both of these teachers had worked at the school for five years so that their experience with minority ethnic pupils was becoming quite distant.

One of the very few minority ethnic teachers whom we interviewed commented on the effect that these patterns of experience had on the ethos of the staff group in the school:

T: So, where I went to school the ethnic minorities were the majority... And er, but everyone just accepted that, everybody knew about each other's cultures and beliefs. When I moved up here it was a bit of a culture shock... If they start guessing your first name it wouldn't even come into their mind that you don't, you have a non-Christian first name. Er they start guessing William or Wayne or, because they just don't know, they're just very closed minded about ethnic and cultural issues, because they've not experienced it.

I: Right. Now you're saying it's a culture shock, in what way?

T: Well in every possible way, er, there isn't any, there isn't any kind of, they don't treat you differently because of what you are, they just accept you as one of their own. So there isn't any racism in a sense, but they just don't have an understanding of your culture or what you believe in or what you practise. Er there doesn't seem to be any facilities available for that either, for example if I wanted to do Friday lunchtime prayers, because being a Muslim, where do I go? Because there isn't a provision for that. Whereas where I went to school... there was a room set aside with a facility to do your, you know, your wash and all that. But I suppose there isn't enough children who come from that to merit that. But er it's just very different to come from where you've got all kinds of cultures to a place where everybody's predominantly white... I say that in, you know, just, and er, but you realise very quickly that they don't treat you differently, but they are interested, the students are very interested in what, what you've done and what your practice is...

One of the parents whom we interviewed worked as a learning support assistant in a mainly white secondary school. She too commented on the general ethos of the staff group:

M: They should be more aware of different cultures, which they're lacking in the whole school. Not many children know about other cultures than English culture. Maybe there should be a Multi-Cultural Day. They have RE, but that doesn't get very far. They're not well informed or the staff... Like Ramadan, when I came I told the staff that I'm Muslim, and in a way they are now aware.

I: But you've had to make them aware.

M: They understand, I don't know, they can go to extremes, and some will understand and some won't, I think that's their problem – they are not aware of other cultures apart from English. I used to work in F school where it was more multicultural – no problem at all because all the people were aware. Like Eid. It's very special for Muslims, but I feel as though if I want to take a day off, I'm a bit reluctant to ask for a day off... whereas other schools, because they have a day off for Eid to celebrate. Unless I ask for a day off, I don't think they're aware even that it's Eid.

Because our work focused on the education of minority ethnic pupils, some white teachers who normally saw no reason to highlight this group in professional discussion, had to find the words to do so during our interviews with them. We noted that the ways in which they referred to the people we were talking about sometimes suggested unconscious condescension and stereotyping. For example, when a Year 8 form tutor was describing the town where the school was situated, he said in passing:

We have lots of areas in (the town) which are predominantly Asian or whatever, and my next door neighbours are Afro-Caribbeans, lovely people.

In the context of interviews about this research other teachers generalised about *"the hatred, almost between Negroes and Asians"*, speculated as to whether a Black Caribbean school governor was *"a true negro"*, and debated the purity of Anglo-Saxon stock. A year 8 form tutor conveyed his underlying assumptions about Asian families when he said of one child in his form:

> *I don't see his family background as being a problem to, as being the cause of his behaviour at all.*

A Head of PE in a secondary school was aware of the tendency in her staff team to stereotype groups in relation to physical prowess:

> *I think it is true that we do see an Afro-Caribbean and we do think netball player, or athlete. We do. You can't help that. That's sort of true, I mean I had the most fantastic netball team in (multiethnic city)... Afro-Caribbean girls, yeah. Fantastic (laughs).*

The potential contribution of minority ethnic staff

If such thinking exists, one major challenge to it could be the presence on the staff of minority ethnic teachers. However, the teaching staff in the case study schools was almost entirely white. Across the fourteen schools in the sample there were only three minority ethnic teachers at the time of the study (plus a small number more classroom assistants and other support staff). Several of our informants, head teachers and other staff as well as children and parents, argued that there would be many advantages to their school if it had teachers from a wider range of cultural backgrounds on the staff. Some of the arguments they put are recorded in Table 11.2.

Table 11.2 Arguments given by our informants for having teachers from a wider range of cultural backgrounds on the staff

Christine, a Black African child in Year 5:
C: Since Miss M has been here - she was the first African teacher. Since she's been here - you know she's a different colour from me [she was a white teacher from South Africa on a temporary contract filling a vacancy], everybody... It made me fit in more because she said she came from there. So it was quite, they didn't want to do anything, otherwise they might get into trouble. (Both laugh.)
I: You felt it was good that there was someone who came from Africa who was a teacher.
C: Yeah, I felt it was good because they would know how I felt. And she did know how I felt. Because, as well, before in South Africa it wasn't, um, people who were not black weren't really welcome to our part of Africa. But now they are, now it's all mixed, so I felt that...
I: And what it means to you is that people will understand your position better, some of the staff will?
C: Yeah. All the staff do, but I think that people who have been through it understand more... I feel more comfortable with them. I felt comfortable before, after my mum had sorted out the problems [problems of racist name-calling that she had discussed earlier in the interview]. And now I feel very comfortable...

The mother of a Year 6 child, Sandeep, spoke warmly of her school, praising the teachers' achievements and their caring attitude towards all the children. At the same time she felt there were limitations. For example, they did not support the maintenance of community languages, as had happened at the children's previous multiethnic school:
This school would do fine if they just had a teacher who's Asian, or who had more languages.

A primary school head teacher:
We are also very fortunate because we have got some members of staff who are from different backgrounds. We have one teacher who is from Sri Lanka and who is a practising Hindu and we also have got a teacher from West Africa. I have used those resources a lot with Key Stage 1 because it is much more meaningful to children if a person is there and they can come in. We were doing something on clothes so they came in and showed the lovely clothes that they wear on special occasions... J. (is) an excellent PE teacher and an excellent role model for the children to see as a Muslim.

The head teacher of another primary school recalled a Muslim teacher who had initially hesitated to apply for a post at the school once she saw its ethnic make-up. She had been encouraged to do so, and he remembered her as "*the best RE teacher we've ever had. Her teaching of religious symbols and festivals was very good. To other teachers it has little significance.*"

A Year 8 form tutor noted that his previous school, which was much larger and had a relatively high proportion of Asian pupils (15 - 20%), had had an Asian school link officer and a maths teacher who was also Asian:
Any problems, (if we) had to deal with parents and language could be a problem... Very useful to the school, and I think a lot more was achieved because of it.

The expression of such views in general terms should not perhaps be taken at their face value. One primary head teacher with a small staff who spoke in warm terms about the value of minority ethnic teachers was not able to answer a question about the background of a black teacher who had recently left:

Do you know, I don't know. Isn't that awful? I've never asked him. He is from the Caribbean.

As we have noted earlier, one supply teacher from another country encountered implicit racism in an all-white staff group. We were not told of such an incident in any other school. When a teacher from an Asian background in one school was asked whether people were treated fairly in the school, she pointed out that she had been given significant responsibilities very early in her career:

T: I think everyone's treated the same. I mean I can be an example of that... I mean you've seen how much responsibility I've got already. Er, I think I'm the only teacher at my stage... I'm the only... who's ever had responsibility, the school's ever appointed... I've done very well. I think they appoint by merit... not what you look like, you know. On the other side of the coin you could say well it looks very good for the school if they, if they have someone in management who is Asian in a predominantly white area... So there's two ways of looking at it. It's like where I was at school... they appointed a female black head of P.E. in an all-boys school, so she was female and she was black and they were delighted because it looked good from an ethnic, you know, from that point of view...
I: But you're not, you don't, presumably you don't think, or do you think that might be the case?
T: No I don't.
I: You don't?
T: No... Because I know I'm good at what I do and I get... sorry to be big-headed... If I wasn't confident in myself, then I would wonder, well, why did I get this job... when I'm not very good at it, but I think I got it because, I think, I'm good at it.

In some areas there was parental opposition to the appointment of minority ethnic teachers. A head commented:

> *I think the precedent of the first (minority) teacher was quite difficult for some particular parents. They...probably the same parents may feel jealous of any young attractive professional female who is outwardly successful while they see themselves overloaded with the responsibilities of the children.*

For example, a Nigerian teacher who joined the staff of a primary school in a white working class area had to work hard to gain acceptance from a minority of the parents. Her head teacher (who mentioned her in the extract quoted in Table 9.2) said:

> *Once she had been here some time, and she had really proved that she cared about teaching and she cared about the children and they had seen that she was willing to attend evening meetings at some cost to her own family, then that sort of swung the pendulum.*

The pivotal event was when she brought her own children to a parents' evening and they became tired and bored playing in the head teacher's office. They strayed into the area where their mother, with other teachers, was meeting parents. There was then a scene that most parents could empathise with.

In another school the head noted that there was less resistance to a black male teacher than to two women appointed somewhat later. In that school similar hostility was shown in more trivial ways too: some parents refused to pay 50p towards the cost of having an Indian storyteller as part of the school's activities for a Book Week.

Teachers' knowledge of their pupils' backgrounds

Children and parents frequently commented on teachers' ignorance of their cultural and religious backgrounds. Many of the teachers too expressed concern that they did not know enough about these issues or about relevant teaching strategies. In addition, they often displayed caution and reticence about addressing cultural matters with the pupils or their parents. The effect of this sensitivity (or lack of curiosity) was evident to us when teachers made basic factual errors in describing their pupils during an interview. We noted, in particular, those examples of this where having inaccurate personal information about a pupil might have had some relevance to classroom management or teaching. For instance, a primary school teacher thought that a boy in her class who had been admitted recently after having his previous education in Bermuda had come from Uganda. In a secondary school the form tutor of a boy in Year 9 did not know that he came from an orthodox Muslim background.

The class teacher of a Year 4 girl who had come to this country from Sierra Leone two years earlier was confused about the order in which she and her brother had come here and about who was who in the family. "*You get very limited information*", she said, placing responsibility elsewhere. Form tutors and class teachers varied in their reaction when we asked them to confirm details about children's backgrounds. Some were slightly embarrassed not to have the information at their fingertips. One said: "*I suppose I should know really.*" Another returned to the issue when invited to raise anything he wished at the end of the interview: "*I don't think I was given enough information about Sabirah's and Abeerah's background. I realise it's partly my fault.*"

The reaction from others (mainly in secondary schools) could almost be described as defiant. This can be illustrated from an exchange between the researcher and the form tutor of a Year 8 girl from an Indian Sikh background:

I: What do you know about Karamdeep's ethnic background?
T: Nothing. How's that!
I: Family circumstances?
T: Don't know.
I: Languages?
T: Don't know.
I: What's she like academically?
T: Quite bright, across all subjects.
I: Socially?
T: She's well integrated.
I: Religious worship?
T: No idea...

It may be that teachers' sense of responsibility for gathering such information will vary according to the roles that a form tutor has in their respective schools. In the secondary school where that interview took place the form tutor of another child who had learning difficulties was not aware of her language background even though it was plainly relevant to her problems with various subjects. At the same time the school's SENCo displayed a clear understanding of relevant aspects of her background:

Sabirah struggles and has been frustrated. She's quite bright, and will get there in the end. But it's very much working on the SEN programmes, and adapting them... I know she's originally from Iraq, a refugee, via Bulgaria. English is the third language she's had to deal with. Her brother is similar, but not quite as bright, so we'll have to do a lot more with him and give him a lot more classroom support than Sabirah. Take reading and writing out of the equation and Sabirah is quite a bright young lady...

Evaluation of teachers' support in general and their response to diversity

As we have noted earlier, the teachers we interviewed often argued that, in the interest of fairness and equality, ethnic differences should be ignored in the classroom and in discussing pupils. This position was sometimes maintained even when children chose to emphasise their distinctiveness in the way they dressed or when it was evident from their language. It was clearly relevant that teachers felt they had not been prepared for work with minority ethnic pupils on training courses and staff development programmes. The arguments that teachers put on these issues were illustrated in Chapter 8, and we will not present further examples here. But it will help to round out the picture of how teachers were seen by the children and parents if we provide some further examples of their comments.

In general, the children and parents whom we met made many more positive than negative comments about the staff of the schools. At the same time almost every interviewee had some suggestions for improvement. Many of the comments that were made by minority ethnic parents reflected general parental concerns that are shared by very many parents. For example, the mother of a Year 6 boy recalled with contempt her son's previous teacher:

Last year Spencer had a male teacher and he did not progress at all for that whole year. This male teacher, he is not there anymore, he had his favourites in class. Spencer is the type of kid who will do his utmost best for you if he sees you appreciate what he is trying to do. OK when you have got 30 children around to teach, Spencer has got to understand that he has got to do things for himself rather than to impress other people. But Mr L was a terrible teacher. A lot of parents were unhappy with him. He was like one of the kids. He had mood swings and tantrums.

A parent who had grown up in East Africa was critical of the discipline regime in her child's school here. She would like the teachers to be stricter with all the children. But she did not entirely blame the teachers. It was the government's fault for not allowing teachers to be strict with them - "*to treat my children as I think is best for them*", and that includes smacking. She described how her older son had tried to burn the edge of a table at school when he was bored. "*He wouldn't have tried that at home [i.e. in Uganda].*"

The mother of a Year 5 girl felt that her daughter was not challenged enough or given enough work to do:

M: The only thing which was behind was her reading which has improved a lot. Having said that we did most of that at home. She was practising reading in the school about once a month. They didn't help her on that...

I: They felt she was behind with her reading?

M: I told them that was because Yusra mainly read in Arabic. Writing was perfect, and maths perfect and religion excellent - that was until she came here.

I: They held the possibility of a special needs class. What happened about that?

M: I personally feel that she didn't need it yet. When I asked for homework, what she brought home she did in 5 minutes. What she brought home a child of six could do.

I: ...you feel that they don't stimulate them or push them enough.

M: They don't pursue or push a child further. They haven't got the resources, and basically the teachers just don't want to know. When I asked for homework, they sort of questioned that. I asked for maths homework for Yusra. Yet I am still waiting for them to sort it out and that must be way over a year.

Positive comments were much more common. They often emphasised the fact that particular teachers were very approachable, that they worked hard for the pupils and that they were fair to everyone in the class. For the parents of children who were struggling there was special appreciation of staff (teachers and assistants) who were willing to give them extra help to get over a problem. For example, the mother of Jabal who was now in Year 4 remembered his previous class teacher with great affection both for her support when he was bullied and for her help over work problems:

Working in that class, his confidence went up fifty percent or seventy five percent. I think she was the biggest part of it. She is a lovely teacher.

While remarks of that kind might have been made by any parent, some of the observations from parents and older pupils reflected particular concerns arising from the situation of a minority ethnic pupil. Frequently they urged the value of teachers having a better knowledge and understanding of the cultural backgrounds of their pupils. Another recurrent theme (which we discussed in Chapter 7) was that a very small number of teachers did not respond with the sense of urgency that families felt was needed when a pupil complained of racist name-calling and teasing. We noted, though, that, in contrast to previous surveys involving older pupils, very few children or parents in this sample suggested that teachers had adopted racist attitudes in their dealings with them. Whilst

some teachers were seen as having "favourites", there were few comments indicating that a minority ethnic pupil would never be a favourite. Positive comments from parents were more likely when they had confidence in their lines of communication with the staff. That is the subject of the next chapter.

11.3 Overview of findings

1. More than a third of the 77 teachers who were interviewed had had very little or no experience with minority ethnic pupils during their training or in previous schools where they had worked. Many others had served in their present schools for more than ten years, so that their experience in a multi-ethnic setting was now very distant.

2. The mainly white pupil population of the schools was served by an almost entirely white teaching staff. Across the 14 schools in the sample there were only three minority ethnic teachers at the time of the study. A number of head teachers and other staff argued that there would be many advantages to their school in having teachers from a wider range of cultural backgrounds on the staff.

3. Many of the teachers we met expressed concern about what they saw as their comparative ignorance of the cultural backgrounds of the pupils we were discussing and of issues in multi-ethnic education. Such concerns were sometimes shown to be justified when basic factual errors were made during the interviews. The majority of the teachers tended to minimise the significance of ethnic differences when discussing their pupils. Even those who taught children who displayed clear differences (e.g. in style of dress or use of language) frequently argued that these factors were not relevant to the way they perceived or treated them.

4. Very few of the teachers reported that they had attended recent courses or staff development programmes that covered these issues. The focus of a large proportion of recent staff development had been central government initiatives and curriculum/syllabus change. Perhaps for this reason RE specialists were more likely than any other group of teachers to report that they had attended courses with a relevance to this field.

5. The children and parents whom we met made many more positive than negative comments about the staff of the schools, though there were few interviews without some suggestions for improvement. Many of the comments reflected general parental concerns and might have been made by any parent or child in the school, e.g. valuing approachability, commitment to pupils, fairness, willingness to give extra help when a child was struggling with some of the work.

6. Other observations from parents and older pupils reflected particular concerns arising from the situation of a minority ethnic pupil. The most common of these were wishing that teachers had a better knowledge and understanding of the cultural backgrounds of their pupils and finding that a very few individual teachers were not strongly committed to protecting their pupils from name-calling and teasing. There were also rare instances of individual teachers appearing to display lower expectations of their minority ethnic pupils than of others.

Chapter 12 Home-School Relationships

Summary

The research questions addressed in this section are:

- How do minority ethnic parents see the relationship between their home culture and their children's school culture?
- To what extent do the schools' arrangements for communication with parents meet the needs and interests of all families with children in the schools, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds?

The principal findings reported here are:

- Both teachers and parents expected the normal arrangements for home-school contact to serve the needs of minority ethnic children. Many parents participated fully in the life of their child's school, attending special events as well as parents' evenings and expressing satisfaction with the information they received on their child's progress, the opportunities they had to discuss it and the accessibility of key staff if they needed to report a problem.
- Those who were less satisfied with their contact with the school highlighted three kinds of problem. These were difficulties of communication for those with a limited command of English, a failure to respond effectively to complaints of racial harassment and a difference of view about how best to help a child whose progress was disappointing.

12.1 Introduction

The task of preparing children for adulthood is a joint task in which parents and teachers need to have some degree of mutual understanding and, ideally, the kind of mutual trust that makes partnership possible. "Real home-school partnership", or some variant on it, is commonly included in researchers' lists of conditions for school improvement. MacBeath and Stoll (2001) described what was required as:

> *Staff believe that parents have a key role to play in supporting pupil learning, and in the school in general. Staff and management make efforts to inform and involve parents on a collaborative basis.* (p. 154)

Over a period of years there has been a steady increase in official recognition of the importance of parental involvement in schools in this country (Vincent, 1996) and overseas (Kelly-Laine, 1998). It is normal and expected school practice to reinforce parents' efforts to enhance their children's learning by:

- providing them with regular reports on their progress;
- holding regular open evenings for parents where they meet their children's teachers individually;
- communicating with them about curriculum innovations;
- extending children's learning time with homework.

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These routine activities are commonly supplemented through after-school programmes or family workshops and through involving parents in target-setting for their children. Some parents are additionally engaged in voluntary work to support the school's activities or in elected office to support its governance.

There is evidence from multiethnic schools that, while most minority ethnic parents are highly motivated to ensure that their children do well at school, some may have difficulty in engaging fully in these supportive activities. This may be because they demonstrate their interest in different ways from the middle class white parents whose expectations have typically influenced the way in which home-school partnerships are implemented (Huss-Keeler, 1997), or it may be because of language difficulties or a gap between the parents' own experience of learning at school and the strategies adopted in their child's school in a different cultural setting (De Abreu et al, 2002). Even when schools have been selected because they are seen as successful, many minority ethnic parents have expressed serious concerns about them in focus groups and individual interviews. For example, Blair and Bourne (2000) reported:

> *Staff in all the schools we visited talked about the importance of involving parents in the education of their children if attainment was to be raised. Similarly, all the parents who took part in the study, agreed that their participation in their children's education was very important. However, our discussions with minority ethnic group parents in the focus groups indicated that there is often a difference of perception between schools and parents as to the nature and purpose of parental involvement in their children's education. From parents' accounts, it seems that schools do not communicate clearly what they expect of parents, nor do they always understand what parents expect of them. This results in systems of communication which parents do not always find helpful or appropriate, and in discussions about children which do not address some basic concerns which parents have...*
>
> *We did note, however, a number of schools where serious attempts were being made to work with parents through one to one meetings on children's progress, workshops on the curriculum, and consulting parents through parents' groups and associations on educational matters. In some schools minority ethnic group parents were represented on school governing bodies. These features of provision made a difference to parents who felt intimidated and excluded and encouraged them to participate in school activities which they might not otherwise have done. 'Link' teachers, bilingual teachers and home-school liaison workers seem to be a valuable resource in this process.* (pp. 136 - 137)

There does not seem to have been significant research or development work on the involvement of minority ethnic parents in mainly white schools. Of 23 Education Support Grant projects studied by Tomlinson (1990) four projects worked with parents or governors, two running parent workshops, but the major focus of concern among the project workers appears to have been "*to find strategies to influence and educate white parents*" (p. 155). In this chapter we start by examining how parents in the case study schools perceived their relationships with their children's teachers and then move on to an analysis of teachers' perspectives on the issue.

12.2 Observations made by parents and teachers

Many of the parents whom we met gave a positive picture of their communication with their children's schools. They attended parents' evenings and participated in special events. If they had concerns about the information that they received about their child's progress or about the conditions for talking this through with teachers, they were concerns that would be widely shared by parents in general. For example, Spencer's mother would have liked him to have more homework now that he was in Year 6:

> *He could do with having more homework. My friend's daughter is the same age who goes to L. Junior and she gets homework every night and she is a lot brighter... It will be a big shock when he goes to Senior school with homework every night. I think they should have been built up towards that.*

Stephen's parents were critical of the arrangements for a Year 5 parents' evening:

> *M: They haven't got time to talk to you, it is quick onto the next person.*
>
> *F: They have got a lot of people to see and only 10 - 15 minutes. There is not enough time to cover anything.*
>
> *M: You look at his tray and then you go and talk to the teacher. It is not in-depth really. It should be.*
>
> *F: They are very helpful if you went in if you arrange to see the teacher and they would have more time for you.*

These were issues that might have been raised by any parents at the schools. As Stephen's parents indicated, a key concern for many minority ethnic parents was to have access to teachers if individual problems occurred. The schools all had arrangements in place for this, and a number of parents reported that they had taken up problems concerning their child with a successful outcome. As we noted in Chapter 7, this did not always happen when the problem involved racist name calling or bullying. With that exception, however, parents as well as teachers expected the normal arrangements for home-school contact to serve the needs of minority ethnic children. A Chinese mother expressed her feelings on the subject in this interview:

> *I: Then schools have lots of things for parents to come to like parents evening and sports day. What do you come to?*
>
> *M: Everything. My children join in all the events, and if they have a play they take part. I just want to be part of them. I just mean I don't want to be left out, I just want to be normal like other people.*
>
> *I: So when you come to parents' evenings, do they explain well?*
>
> *M: Yes. They tell what they're good at and what they're not so good at.*
>
> *I: I think you are saying this is a friendly school.*
>
> *M: Yes.*
>
> *I: But there must have been some times when you felt this is a white school.*
>
> *M: Well to tell the truth no... No. I never feel that. We feel we belong here as (much as) other people. They never make you feel like that.*

Some of the parents were particularly appreciative of school newsletters and class or individual diaries. These were helpful to all, but had a special value for those parents who were inhibited from giving their children the support they wanted to give because they did not fully understand the school's systems or did not have a strong command of English. Where there was provision in the individual diaries for a brief written comment by parents, this increased the likelihood that any misunderstandings would be identified and dealt with at an early stage.

In some cases parents sought (and did not always receive) guidance on the purchase of learning materials for home use. Thus Joshua's mother said:

> *Because they do things different, we always have a nightmare when we go to parent teacher meetings, because they say: "This is how we do it. So the best thing to do is to let them get on with it."*

She and her husband were not prepared to be passive parents. In the absence of an up-to-date school handbook on the school's methods, advising them how to do things at home with the children, they used to go to W.H. Smith's. But that did not help very much:

> *It's still different from what they teach at school. I spent pounds on textbooks for working at home. And I think I've just bought the book and it's the latest edition, and they say: "Mummy, we do not do it that way." And it's so frustrating.*

In contrast, a school which sold revision guides to parents found that they were particularly appreciated by parents who had come from overseas.

Parents who had experienced a different school regime in another country were sometimes confused by arrangements here. For example, Michael's mother was accustomed to signing her children's homework to confirm to their school in the Caribbean that it was their own work. He finds school work easy and has had a good record both there and in this country, but the transition was not without misunderstandings.

> *He very rarely gets anything wrong. And when he's come home, I used to say to him, "Michael, don't you have homework?" Or actually I would say to him, "Where's your homework?" "I don't have it." So when I went to the parent-teachers' meeting, I said to his teacher, "Michael never comes home with homework." She said, "Oh yes, he does." I said, "Well, I've never seen it." She said, "Well, it's always handed in and completed."... And I thought it was because at home when the children have school work, we have to sign. So that it shows that the parents are involved. But I've never been given anything to sign. So I was never aware that he had homework. And she said, "Oh no, he's always done his homework."*

Saad had much more difficulty with the transition and with school work in general after he had joined his mother from East Africa. In England he used to hide his homework at first, according to his mother, because he did not know how to do it. "*I was mad with him when I found out.*" Then he started showing her the homework. She was not able to help him, but his older sister did, and they set up a regular routine for it.

The children, of course, found out which of their parents could help them best with each subject. In their case there was sometimes an extra dimension, as a Year 7 child from a mixed heritage background explained:

> *C: And when they do homework, they can help them in a way. If they've got an English dad, or mum, then they'll be able to help them, 'cause they learnt that when they were at school as well... so they'll be able to help him do all his homework and...*
>
> *I: Yeah. Do you find that your dad's more able to help you, because he went to school in England, or can your mum help you as well?*
>
> *C: My mum can help me, 'cause she's good at Maths, because when she was at her old school she was good... But now she, she teaches me the way she did it there, and my dad, he's really helpful as well, 'cause he teaches me, well he doesn't teach me, he helps me with my homework when I get stuck...*

I: When I started this just now, I was asking you about how parents help their kids with work and you were saying that your dad's able to help you, your mum helps you, but sometimes your dad's able to help you more because he was at school here.

C: Yeah.

I: I'm wondering what kind of thing is different for your mum from the work you did, you think, that she did.

C: Um, well we do everything really differently, like when I used to do Maths at my old school and this school, my teacher taught it one way and my mum taught it another way, so I wasn't quite sure which method to use.

I: So there were different ways of doing ways of doing Maths and you got a bit confused...

C: Yeah.

I: as to which one- What, with things like taking away, or subtraction, or something?

C: Yeah, 'cause when we used to do division... mum did it the long way and I did it the short way, and I used to get confused which way to do it.

I: Right. What did she say about that?

C: (He laughs) She said that it was much easier to do the long way, but I thought it was easier to do the short way.

I: Because that's what you'd learnt in school?

C: Yeah.

The often positive but ultimately mixed overall picture can be illustrated from the researcher's summary note after analysing interviews with parents and teachers at one secondary school:

The overall impression from both parents and teachers at the school was wholly positive. We met the parents of six of the eight minority ethnic children we had interviewed there. They had all used the opportunities for contact that were available. None expressed dissatisfaction with the support or information they had received. There were two possible exceptions to this rosy picture. One was the negative view that a head of department expressed of what he saw as ineffectual contact with F's mother when there were problems. (I gave no credence to this because the form tutor spoke warmly about her support and follow-up over the same problems, and this head of department was critical of parents generally.) The other exception (which is much more serious) was that there was no interpreter to work with the parents of a Japanese pupil at a parents' evening even though they had great difficulty understanding what was said to them and made little or no attempt to initiate points of their own.

The form tutor for that pupil described how she spoke very slowly and the parents nodded their heads and communicated very little back to her. They were unfailingly polite, but she did not feel that the exchange had been effective. There had been an interpreter available in the past, and she did not know why he was not there this year. In another secondary school the form tutor for a Year 8 boy criticised his parents for failing to sign his dairy or to send absence notes, apparently unaware that their command of English was very limited. In one of the primary schools the head teacher aimed to overcome such problems in a traditional way by using older siblings as interpreters without noting the disadvantages of the strategy:

And we make extensive use of older children in the family, because often the parents don't have good communication skills, and older children can come in and be with

parents at parents' evenings, open evenings etc. Often we do that at the end of school so children come directly from secondary school and work with the teachers.

Sometimes, even when there was no obvious language barrier, there were misunderstandings because of differences in expectation that had a cultural basis. For example, it might have seemed on the surface that there was a good working relationship between Paul's Black African parents and his Year 4 class teacher and her colleagues. Although his father could only rarely attend meetings, his well-educated mother was a volunteer helper in the school and a regular supporter of its functions and activities. But, as the case study below demonstrates, the surface picture was partially misleading. There were tensions and areas of serious misunderstanding between his mother and the teachers, and the school's strong commitment to effective communication with parents had not overcome them.

A case study illustrating a high level of parental engagement but limited home-school communication between teachers and parents about what most concerns them both
Paul's family had moved to the area three years earlier. When we met him, he was in Year 4. His mother, who had no employment outside the home, said: *I have a very good relationship with all of the teachers, I may not know their names, but they know mine... I used to do voluntary work here at the school, helping with escorting the pupils in the school transport... They rang me up and asked me to do it because they knew we had just moved here. They thought it would be good for me, a way to meet other parents, other than going to parents meetings, a way to get to know the school. Everybody knows me from teachers to kitchen staff because I have been doing it for three years now, except for two terms.* *I: Do you help with schoolwork at home?* *M: Oh yes. I help with English, his dad helps with maths.If his dad isn't there then his brother helps him.. I am very interested in what they are doing. A few months back I contacted the school because Paul wasn't bringing any homework home. The teacher wrote back the same day and said it's in his desk. I made Paul collect all of his homework and he done it all over the weekend. I attached a note to his books for the teacher explaining that he had done it all at the weekend. She wrote back explaining that it was now all up to date and that she was very proud of him and me. Homework is very important to me and I think teachers should have a one to one relationship with parents to ensure that they do their homework....*
In a separate interview Paul's class teacher responded with concern to a question about how he was getting on in school: *Not well, Paul is a real worry. I feel very worried about him. In every class you have there are a few children that you start to worry about. I had him in Year 2 as well. He's a child of concern. I've spoken to his parents, I think possibly that what they are doing to help him isn't really helping him. I'd hate actually for them to know this. I think that they are giving him a lot of academic work to be done at night. They think that it's going to help him at school and I feel he's just punch drunk with it all. He's not motivated particularly in school he likes the social elements of it. He's not allowed to go to parties, he's not allowed to do all the other things children do after school. I can see where they are coming from because they think that education is important but they are not getting the balance right somewhere along the line. We had real trouble getting him to run for the school in our yearly event. The headmistress persuaded his parents in the end. He even got a medal for coming first in the relay race. He was so happy, I was happy for him because he succeeded in something. It was so great to see that, but most of the time he's not interested. I know there's an issue with boys and literacy, so we are trying to do things like getting text on how to mend things etc. but even that doesn't seem to inspire him at all. I think he sees all schoolwork as work and to be avoided and not interesting to do.He likes his sports because for once he doesn't have to put things down on paper and learn it. One of the other problems I have with him is that he is being taught by traditional methods. The Numeracy Strategy that we teach, the children have to think around numbers and place value and to think around strategies. He has only got one strategy and he can't see past that and I find it hard to get it through to him. His number work is actually pretty good. If you look at all of his assessments, it's not abysmal by any chance but he has the ability with number work but he's not achieving as well as his ability. If we were to test his ability and see what he's actually producing there would be a big mismatch, again it does seem because he's not interested in it. It's just really difficult to get him motivated, as I said I had him in year 2, he was more motivated then and it just seems to be getting worse. It's a worry.*

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I: The contact with Paul's mother, how would you say that relationship is?
T: I would say that it's the same as the majority of the children in the class. They come to parents evenings, either mum or dad and I don't really see her other than that. I've seen her a couple of times when I've asked to see her, when Paul hasn't done his homework. I've always been careful as to how I've approached it with knowing the situation at home. She's very easy to talk to, very concerned about Paul and very supportive of the school. They have never asked to see me out of those contexts at all.
I: But that door is always open?
T: Oh yes, definitely. She was really good about the homework, he was up to all sorts with it, like hiding it. We all send a letter home at the beginning of term telling them what we are going to be doing that term, when the homework goes out and when it's due back in. Initially she said he hadn't had any homework for two weeks but of course he had. I think also that they possibly think that the homework I send home isn't good homework They like it when I send a page of maths for him to do. When he gets some research to do I don't think that he gets any help or resources to use. I tend to give what I can and as a lot of them haven't got computers, I don't think that Paul has got access to the internet, so then I give photocopies of things and give them an extra week and tell them to go to the library etc. They might see that as the sort of help they wouldn't want him engaged in I suppose, but at least he's doing it now ... I have tried talking to his mum and dad about having some free time at home. I can see they do it for the best intentions but that is the worst possible part. What they've got for him to do at home is not actually helping him academically at all.
I: Do you think that they are coming from a particular cultural stance?
T: Yes of course they are. Where they come from, the way that you get yourself out of it is education. I understand that perfectly and I know they do it for the best intentions because they love him, but it's not actually the best thing for him. For me to say that I think he should have a bit of free time they're probably thinking, liberal teacher, doesn't know what she's talking about. I really do think that if you say, if you do this by the end of the week you can have this time with your friends. I think that he needs a carrot because then he'll start succeeding and he will succeed because he's bright.

The tensions that developed between parents and teachers did not occur only when pupils had unresolved difficulties at school. Another limitation of home-school partnership for many minority ethnic families was their feeling that the teachers did not fully understand the children's backgrounds. In addition, tensions sometimes arose from the uncertainties that surrounded the children's development of a clear sense of identity as a distinctive person in a mainly white school community. When that distinctiveness was ignored at school, some parents were content because they wanted their children to be treated no differently on the basis of their ethnic background. Others felt that, as they were "in someone else's country", they needed to accommodate wholly to the majority culture at school. Even so these parents, like those with more assertive attitudes, expressed concerns about aspects of the school's handling of some issues that made it more likely that their child would deny or feel confused or embarrassed about their home identity. Unchecked racial harassment and name-calling was merely the most visible and extreme example of this. Less obviously unacceptable but still insidious examples usually arose from ignorance in the school rather than ill will. For example, some parents were surprised and upset by the generalised use of the label "Asian" for Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis and by occasional incidents that seemed to imply a lack of respect for family values relating to dress code or sexual relations.

Some parents reported that their children had begun to resist their attempts to acculturate them into their home culture. They offered examples of children who resisted learning their home language or wanted to keep cultural traditions (e.g. over types of food) hidden from their white friends. Most of the parents were prepared to accept this behaviour, associating it with their child's need to act "English" or "British" when at school. But, when they justified this in terms of the child avoiding "embarrassment", they begged an uncomfortable question - should attending a mainly white school necessarily lead to a sense of embarrassment about distinctive aspects of a minority ethnic heritage?

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Many teachers presented a mirror image of that picture but without expressing the same concern about it. When they were asked about the extent to which ME pupils suppressed their identities at school, there was a consensus among teachers that their pupils did not "flaunt it". They offered a variety of explanations for this, including that it was a search for balance, a simple matter of choice, a deliberate separation of family life from school life, a submission to school culture and the expression of the family's aspiration to "middle class" values. Thus there were indications from both teachers and parents that, while the systems for communication between them often seemed to work well, this was partly because neither parents nor pupils in some of the schools in the sample offered a very serious challenge. Genuinely robust and adaptable arrangements would require a deeper level of mutual understanding than was evident in the accounts that were given of the majority of exchanges. In schools that serve substantial numbers of pupils from individual minority ethnic communities relevant expertise is built up in the staff group over time. In these mainly white schools there is no opportunity for that to occur unless a specific and focused effort is made. It was encouraging to note that that had happened in one school when overseas staff from a local manufacturing facility began to send their children there. There was no evidence of it elsewhere.

12.3 Overview of findings

1. Both teachers and parents expected the normal arrangements for home-school contact to serve the needs of minority ethnic children. Many parents participated fully in the life of their child's school, attending special events as well as parents' evenings and expressing satisfaction with the information they received on their child's progress, the opportunities they had to discuss it and the accessibility of key staff if they needed to report a problem.

2. Those who were less satisfied with their contact with the school highlighted three kinds of problem. These were difficulties of communication for those with a limited command of English, a failure to respond effectively to complaints of racial harassment (see section 7.2 above) and a difference of view about how best to help a child whose progress was disappointing.

3. A minority of the schools issued a regular newsletter to keep parents informed about school and class events or a regular diary report to keep them informed about homework and events affecting individual pupils. These arrangements appeared to be of particular value to those minority ethnic parents who had a strong commitment to supporting their children's education but a limited understanding of the system or its language.

4. Some teachers recognised that there were potentially serious underlying tensions that did not ruffle the surface of those generally smooth arrangements but did nonetheless set limits to the effectiveness of home-school partnership for many minority ethnic families. These tensions arose partly from the uncertainties that surrounded the children's development of a clear sense of identity as a distinctive person in a mainly white school community and partly from misunderstandings and poor communication. Significant errors could be made when teachers did not have an adequate knowledge of their pupils' cultural background.

Chapter 13 Children who have a mixed heritage background

The original brief for the project did not refer to children who have a dual or mixed heritage background. It became clear at an early stage, however, that the minority ethnic pupils in mainly white schools include many children with this background. Eventually children with mixed heritage backgrounds of various kinds formed almost a quarter of our sample in the case study schools. This chapter pulls together data from the case studies that relates specifically to their situation.

Summary

The research questions addressed in this section are:

- How do children and young people who have mixed heritage backgrounds see/ experience their lives in mainly white schools?
- What view do their parents and teachers have of their situation?

The principal findings reported here are:

- Mixed heritage children form a significant group among the minority ethnic population of mainly white schools. Many parents believed that this heritage posed additional difficulties for their child's development of a clear sense of identity. Some referred to the risk of black and white partners' children not being accepted within either community.
- Our discussions with the teachers rarely showed that they were aware of the parents' concerns and suggested that their uncertainties about the treatment of all minority ethnic pupils were most acute with mixed heritage children.

13.1 Introduction

In the past the ethnic category system employed in official statistics on children in schools has not facilitated the separate identification of those with a mixed heritage background. For example, in the system used by the DfEE in 1997 the children in this group were divided between "Black other" and "Other" and were grouped with children from various different backgrounds in each of those categories, e.g. in DfEE (1999). While there are no firm national data, it seems extremely likely that pupils with a dual or mixed ethnic background represent a rising proportion of children across regions of the country (Tizard and Phoenix, 1993). The United Kingdom is said to have *"almost the highest number of interracial relationships and resulting offspring anywhere in the west, with 15 per cent of black women and 25 per cent of black men having white partners; one in 20 pre-school children in the UK is mixed"* (Short, 1999). The recent census may provide improved data on the national distribution of people who have mixed and dual heritage backgrounds.

A small but persuasive body of research has suggested that the experiences of mixed-heritage people are distinctive and need to be studied separately from those of black or minority ethnic people generally (Wilson, 1987; Tizard and Phoenix, 1993; Katz, 1996).

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The major theme that is stressed in all of this work is the development of a sense of identity. When a child has a mixed heritage background, it is too simple to define their ethnic identity in terms of the parents' birthplaces or in terms of a homogeneous culture that is associated with the home. New identities will emerge from the person's experiences in the living spaces where mixed heritages are negotiated (see, for example, Luke and Luke, 1998).

In the USA, where race relations are dominated by the impact of the history of slavery, scholars have argued that the dominant binary ethnic/racial classification into "White" versus "Black" causes problems for the self-identification of minorities (Nieto, 2000; Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Nieto's case study of Linda Howard vividly illustrated the influence of these factors on the identity development of a person with a mixed heritage background. Linda, a 19-year old high school student, had a very complex heritage. She described herself as "mixed", but, however much trouble she took to complete forms accurately and to explain her mixed heritage to others, she was regularly "automatically placed in the 'Black' category". But this was not consonant with her experience. As she explained, "*It's hard when you go out in the streets and you've got a bunch of White friends and you're the darkest person there. No matter how light you are to the rest of your family, you're the darkest person there and they say you're Black. Then you go out with a bunch of Black people and you're the lightest there and they say, 'Yeah, my best friend's White'. But, I'm not. I'm both.*" (p.51).

Like the American work, most research on the impact of a mixed heritage background in this country has concerned the most common subset of ethnically mixed partnerships - children with one parent who is Black Caribbean (or, in the States, Black American) and one parent who is White British (in the States, White American). Thus, for example, Wilson (1987) studied ideas about racial identity in 51 children aged 6 - 9 years who had one parent who was Black African or Black Caribbean and one parent who was white. Tizard and Phoenix (1993) interviewed 58 young people around the ages of 15 - 16 years from the same mixed backgrounds. While many of their findings will no doubt be valid for children with a different mixed heritage pattern (e.g. Pakistani/White British), there is a need for research which investigates a broader range of mixed heritage backgrounds directly. One effect of such a shift in the focus of research might be to require greater attention to cultural factors as well as racial factors in the formation of identity (cf. Wilson, 1987, p. 58).

Short (1999) used her story as a child of an English mother and a Pakistani father to illustrate what she saw as three phases in the development of mixed-race consciousness:

1. Having no collective voice, you are preoccupied instead with fitting in with the majority group.
2. Choosing to identify with the black in yourself, you gain strength from being part of a marginalised group with a strong voice and profile.
3. You don't take a "black stance" or merge with the whites, but celebrate the oneness, the completeness, of being mixed.

She argued that in this country "we are somewhere between stages one and two".

Not all researchers would accept that particular notion of stages of development, but the broad categories that she employed are comparable to those employed by others in this field. Wilson (1987) who was working with an age range closer to ours differentiated five groups:

1. The "white" pattern group comprising those children who "far from having a positive orientation to themselves as mixed race or black, appeared to see themselves as belonging to a highly valued white or 'almost white' group".
2. The "black" pattern group comprising those children who "maintained a consistent view of themselves as *black* and a preference for a black identity".
3. The "contrary" pattern group comprising those children who responded inconsistently on different measures in her test and "appeared unable to choose between black and white, light and dark".
4. The "mixed race (white bias)" pattern group comprising those children whose self-identification responses "suggested that they saw themselves as members of either an intermediate colour or an intermediate 'racial' category, which was black, yet who also showed some evidence of white bias".
5. The "black mixed race" pattern group comprising those children who maintained a consistent view of themselves as black mixed race not only in reality but also as an ideal. (pp. 90 - 93)

We have drawn on the thinking of Short and of Wilson to help us to organise the material that emerged during our interviews with children who had a mixed heritage background and their parents and teachers.

13.2 Observations made by children, parents and teachers

The sample of children with a mixed heritage background

In this report the terms *dual heritage* or *mixed heritage* are used to refer to individuals who have two parents from different ethnic backgrounds. One of the parents may be White British, or both may be from minority ethnic backgrounds. As will be seen below, it is helpful to distinguish between children who have one White British parent and children whose parents both come from a minority ethnic background. It is important to be aware of the complex situations that can arise. We have not included in the subsample studied in this chapter one child who was born to two Black African parents in East Africa but is being brought up in this country by a Black African long-term foster mother from the same region and a White British father whom her mother met here and who plays a limited role in her upbringing. Effectively, it seemed, this child was treated by everyone in her family and at school as a Black African child. On the other hand, we have included in the group that is described here a child who was born to a Black Caribbean father (himself born in this country) and a White British mother. His biological mother had never played an active part in looking after him, and he had been looked after for some years by his father and a stepmother who is herself from a mixed heritage background (Black Caribbean/White British).

In our case study sample 15 children had a mixed heritage background. 10 of these children had a Black Caribbean parent, for nine of whom the other parent was White British. The family language was English for 12 of the children. In the other three families the use of English was combined with another home language. Five of the children had no White British element in their heritage. Table 13.1 provides summary details of the children.

Table 13.1 Outline details of the children with a mixed heritage background in the sample

No.	*Phase*	*Father*	*Mother*	*Languages spoken in family*
1	Secondary	Black Caribbean	White British	English
2	Secondary	Black Caribbean	White British	English
3	Secondary	Pakistani	Indian	Urdu/English
4	Primary	Black Caribbean	White European	English
5	Primary	Black Caribbean	White British/ Chinese	English
6	Secondary	White British	Korean	English
7	Secondary	White British	Black American	English
8	Secondary	Pakistani	Malay	Urdu/(English)*
9	Primary	Black Caribbean	White British	English
10	Primary	Black African	Black Caribbean	English
11	Primary	Black Caribbean	White British	English
12	Primary	Black Caribbean	White British	English
13	Primary	Black Caribbean	White British	English
14	Primary	Black Caribbean	White British	English
15	Primary	Egyptian	White European (Polish)	English/Arabic

* Where a language is placed in brackets, it is not used regularly at home by the target child.

Identity development

Most observations made in other chapters in relation to life in the family, school and community apply to our sample of children with a mixed heritage background. As in the earlier research cited above, the dimension that stands out in the interviews with this group is their identity development. That is the main focus of this chapter. We noted, in addition, how teachers described their work with the children in this group, and their comments have been analysed too.

The identity development of mixed heritage children is an issue for families even before they are born. Parents and grandparents worry about social acceptance and the sense of belonging which will be crucial for adjusted identities. In our sample of case studies we found examples of two broad tendencies in the approaches adopted by children in relation to their mixed heritage. One tendency appeared to be driven by the desire to fit in with the majority group. These children were generally aware of being "different" from the majority in some way but sought to minimise the differences in order to be accepted - both in their own thinking and in their self-presentation and the presentation of their families to others. The other tendency involved taking a pride in the minority ethnic element in their heritage and valuing what made them "different". Children were sometimes inconsistent in their preferences and that they did not necessarily behave as their parents expected or wanted. The balancing act of development with a mixed heritage background seems to involve a good deal of wobbling for even the most assured of the tightrope walkers.

Among the parents we also found different views on the way they believed ethnic identity issues should be addressed. These differences were clearly illustrated when they gave their opinions on whether or not one should talk to children about skin colour. Some tried to avoid the subject, some aimed not to put too much emphasis on the black side, and

some tried to be sensitive to their child's preferences. Children whose parents could accommodate to their needs without feeling their own egos to be involved seemed more likely to be confident of success. In the first of the families, which is featured in Table 13.2, pressures surrounded cultural preferences in food as well as other issues.

Table 13.2 Fitting in with the majority group, playing down differences

A secondary pupil who had a Korean mother and a White British father, was very conscious of his mixed heritage background and troubled with fears about being rejected by the majority group at school:

I: If a T.V. interviewer stopped you in the street and asked, "What's your background?" what would you say?

C: Um, I'd say I was born in England. My mum's, um my mum's Korean and my dad's English, I'd just say the truth really...

I: Can you tell me about a time when you were pleased to be someone whose mum is Korean and whose dad is English?

C: No, I don't know...

I: Can you tell me about a time when you were embarrassed?

C: Yeah, like, there's hardly any, there are not very many people who are Korean and sometimes you're left out... a Korean person feels like they don't fit in.

I: You feel you don't fit in?

C: Yeah.

I: I wonder how, what happens that they make you feel like that?

C: I'm not sure. All my friends, I don't have any foreign friends now .. just English .. and I sometimes feel left out.

I: You sometimes feel left out because you're different?

C. Yeah.

I: Do they make you feel different or it's what you feel yourself?

C: ...Like when, say, like some people, they come up to you and say, "Where were you born?" I say I was born in England. "Is your dad English?" "Is your mum Japanese or Chinese?"..

I: Can you tell me about a time when you were proud to be a person who has a Korean mother and an English dad?

C. Some people sometimes say that they wish they were different because they think it would be more interesting.

I: They think it would be more interesting than just being English?

C. Yeah... That sometimes makes me a bit proud.

His mother provided another perspective on how these issues impinge on the household. She told how they had enjoyed a visit to her family in Korea, though he had difficulties because of the language barrier:

M: Well, it was very difficult, because I want him to learn the Korean language, so I usually spoke to him in Korean, but he will never answer me back in Korean, and, uh, he sees himself, uh, he's a bit handicapped, being, having a foreign mother. And uh, he, just refuse me back in Korean.

I: He sees himself as a bit handicapped, having a foreign mother?

M: I think so, yes. He does-

I: How does he show that, not wanting to study Korean?

M: Um, lots of ways. It's, sort of, little things, like even having a, food, eating at a table, food manners different than English. I mean, I don't, don't like very much English way of cooking, eating, you know, it doesn't suit me at all, so I still have Korean style.

I: Right.

M: So when we're, three of us, he's quite happy about that. You know, he's quite happy to be in that group, in, 'cause my husband loves Korean food as well. And he's, he loves that bit. But when his friends visit, or whatever, then he obviously wants burgers and chips, and he doesn't like me eating Korean in front of his friends, or- Not quite strongly, but he, just a, just a, you know-

I: It's something that you can sense?

M: Yes, yes... Sometimes, with new friends, he's got a circle of new friends... he keeps asking me, "Mummy can you not do this tonight?" and "Can you not do that?" You know, so, I mean, obviously, I understand where he come from, so I try to please him in a sense, but apart from that, I don't think he's got much problem.

Table 13.3 concerns a younger child, and the focus is almost entirely on issues relating to skin colour. It will be seen that she is more confident than her mother in addressing these issues.

Table 13.3 Valuing one's mixed heritage and taking pride in the minority ethnic background

A Year 3 pupil, had a White British mother and a British-born father whose parents had come from Jamaica. She was assertive about issues relating to "brown" people. Though she preferred to live in England, she expressed pride in her Jamaican heritage. Talking about racist name calling, she said:
I don't know why they do it cos if you pick on someone with a brown skin and the bully goes on holiday and come back brown, we have no right to pick on them. So there's no reason for them to do it to us. I don't know why they don't have respect. Because one black person was killed because he was brown. It's no offence to the white people but I don't know why.

During a later interview she was asked to describe a time when she had been pleased to be Jamaican:
L: Every time I go on holiday they often ask if I can speak Jamaican and I just laugh. Every time I go on holiday and I have been there for about 2 days people say, "Wow, you have got a good tan, haven't you?" I don't think they realise until they see my Dad because nearly all the time when we go on holiday people told me that I have got a really good tan. If they had seen me about a week later then I would have been really brown. It is nice to think that people think you are brown. I don't have to bathe in the sun. I have got it anyway.
I: Can you tell me about a time when you were embarrassed to have a Jamaican background as well as the English background?
L: I can't think of a time. Quite a few people ask me if my Grandma, Grandpa or Dad speak quite fast, and they do. So I just laugh. I ask them what the time is, and sometimes I don't understand straight away.
I: Can you tell me about a time when you were proud to have a Jamaican and English background?
L: Umm, not proud as such but there are not many people that come from Jamaica and they come to live in England. There is a lot of difference in the weather ... There is not many people living in England that are Jamaican. I think that is an experience for me. I have been to Jamaica but I prefer it here.
I: Just explain a bit more about feeling proud.
L: I feel proud because in everyday you don't usually see someone who is half Jamaican and half English.

Her mother emphasised a quite different perspective when discussing an incident of racist teasing in her infants school:
M: I don't want her to feel different, and the incident in the infants school did make her feel different, and she came home and asked me if she was different. And I don't want her to feel that way, because to us they're not.
I: So what did you tell her?
M: Well, I went and had a word with her teacher about it because there were two incidents. And I just explained that sometimes people say things they don't really mean, because he did apologise. And I didn't really say more than that. It didn't seem that important at the time. She got over it, and she doesn't have any problems making friends, and she can give as (good as) she gets. She comes home sometimes, and I have to be careful to find out what's really happened. And with their father working away so much, it's me who does all the hard work. (Laughs.)

The White British mother and Black Caribbean father of two of the pupils saw a need to steer a middle course, neither over-emphasising ethnicity nor failing to prepare their children for the racism they would inevitably meet at some time or other. These views are illustrated in the extract from their interview in Table 13.4 alongside a quote from one of their sons that demonstrates their success in what they sought to achieve. He portrays his background in terms of his father's values and morals, playing down colour as a significant influence.

Table 13.4	Maintaining a balance and passing on values

The parents said:

F: If other um mixed parents like us, who have children either at L or elsewhere, um over-emphasise the ethnic backgrounds that they have...

M: Or even worse, don't even tell them about it.

F: Well either one or t'other, the extremes, either overdo it by sort of saying you are black, therefore you have to, and so on, the child goes in with a chip. If you don't tell them anything about it, when they come up against it, it (confounds). And again what I was trying to say is if um if people take cognisance of something like that, then the children will have confidence, they will meet racism but they will have that kind of confidence because at home there's the backing, at home they've told them how to handle it, at home they've said just because you have an easy ride at the moment doesn't mean it's going to be an easy ride throughout. One mixed family we do know, um, the mother's on her own, and she's always on the black element, isn't she? ...

M: Always pushing it, pushing it, emphasising it, when she talks to people, when she talks to the children.

F: But she's white, she's a white mother of the...

M: And the children have a few problems, and I feel...

F: She came here to talk to me about it.

M: I feel that it's because she puts so much emphasis on the black side. Now when the children were born, one of the things my parents were worried about was - as they perceived mixed race children, they're not necessarily accepted in the white communities, because they're coloured, and not necessarily accepted in the coloured communities because they're white basically. Um, so we made a very conscious effort, OK, we will not bring them up as black children or white children, we'll bring them up as children, the fact that they have a colour is neither here nor there... And they will know my history, and my family and whatever, and they will know their father's side... Obviously they asked, I mean Janet when she was little... "Mum, why am I this colour and you're pink?" (All laugh.) So I had to explain. The boys didn't ask so much but I think that's because they had a sister who (they) identify with. But we never brought them up as coloured children, or white children, the colour thing did not make a difference.

F: No we try to make it not a difference.

M: Well, yeah, not a difference. They were children, and they had to behave themselves. But as I say this particular lady... and I think that child must be carrying such a weight on his shoulders, because she's not saying, "Oh my son does this, my son does that", or whatever, it's all because his father's black and, what are you doing to him?

During his interview one of their sons described his background in terms of his father's values and morals. Colour did not seem to strike him as a relevant aspect:

I: How would you describe yourself, and your background?

C: Describe myself and my background, um, my background, considering the men, they're very laid back, you know, but um, but with my dad, I mean there's nothing really going on with, er, it's not like we have this, er, religion or anything like that... I mean my dad has been brought up with these certain morals, and very strict rules. But you know, I mean, my mum's dad who's my granddad, he's very laid back, my dad's very laid back, and he's a bit cheeky as well. (That's who) I get it from. And um, but, you know, it's just a normal household, you know, there's no problems and stuff, but it's just the same...

It will be noted that the children featured in Tables 13.3 and 13.4 were lively and self-confident. Those whose view of the social world was less clear-sighted and whose self-image was more precarious found it much more difficult to articulate their position. Thus a Year 8 pupil who had some difficulties in his use of English language, described himself as "*American*" and did not make any spontaneous reference to skin colour. His Black American mother and White British father were divorced, and his mother told the interviewer that she taught the children to ignore skin colour and not take it into consideration. Her son said:

C: ...I'm half American, quarter America, quarter of English and quarter of something else, I think it's German

He did not use the label "*black American*" at any time, but when confronted by the researcher, he elaborated his mixed white and black heritage in terms of "*half of both*", "*mixed*", "*brown*", "*olive*":

I: Can you think of a time when you felt you really didn't like being American, perhaps even when you didn't like being black or half black American?
C: It was always nice...I like it because there's too many white people and not enough black people and I'm both and I like to be half of both.
I: And you like being both?
C: Yes because I'm half caste.
I: Well mixed.
C: Mixed, yes.
I: Like lots of people.
C: But it's gone mainly brown...
I: And if I met one of the people from your class,(how would they describe you?)
C: I'm olive, olive mainly, half-caste, and mixed in my class.

Children whose mixed heritage background does not have a White British component

Five of the fifteen children in the mixed heritage group had no White British component in their background. As would be expected, this was a heterogeneous subgroup. In some cases, while there was a difference between the parents' background, there were also very substantial areas of similarity, so that the child's experience appears to have been effectively that the family had a single ethnic or cultural tradition. For example, one boy's mother was Malay and his father was Pakistani, but both spoke Urdu, and the family practised Islam. The interviews with this pupil and his mother focused on the range of issues that came up in other interviews with families from a Pakistani Muslim background.

In other cases changes in family circumstances meant that, while a child's birth parents came from different backgrounds, the current household was ethnically homogeneous. Before one Year 4 child was four years old, her Zimbabwean father had separated from her UK-born mother whose family roots were in Jamaica. The new family unit spent some years in Jamaica before returning to England. By then her mother had remarried, and she had a Black Caribbean stepfather. She remained in touch with her father, seeing him every weekend.

Some of the families in this group shared more of the characteristics of the majority of the mixed heritage families discussed above. For example, one child (whose sister is quoted below) had an Egyptian father and a British-born Polish mother and had moved between Egypt and England more than once during her early and middle childhood. But her mother's family was white in appearance. Her mother's and sister's observations on their situation were similar to those of the White British mothers in mixed partnerships whom we interviewed.

Because there were very few children in the sample who had a mixed heritage background with no White British parent, it is not possible to draw general conclusions about their experience. But the presence of this heterogeneous group should not be ignored when children with a mixed heritage background are discussed. They form a

minority within that population whose experiences can be distinguished from those of the majority but show the influence of their mixed heritage background.

The imposition of an identity by others

Whatever the wishes of the children and their parents, an ethnic identity was often imposed on a child by others - normally the label attached to the minority ethnic or "different" component of their background. For example, the older sister of the pupil mentioned above recalled school in London and Egypt:

> *I got a bit of abuse when I was 5 or 6 but I never really understood it. It was like kid's play which I ignored and carried on with my friends. Then we moved to Egypt. I had a bit of trouble because I had an English mum. I went to school there. It was not so bad, they were more curious than trying to be nasty. "Do you eat the same as us?"*

Later in her school life, after they had returned to England, the problems were much more severe. In fact, in her secondary school (not one of the case study schools in this project) she suffered the most extreme harassment that we heard about during the project. This interview included the sister (S) and her mother (Mo) together:

> *S: The Headmaster was quite shocked when he saw my dad. My Uncle (mum's brother) used to take me to school. He would take me inside the gates so others automatically thought he was my dad. When my dad came to parents evening in the first year, the Headmaster took a step back and asked who my dad was. So he said, "You are mixed race, not English."*
>
> *I: As blunt as that?*
>
> *Mo: He refused to talk to him...*
>
> *I: Did you just put up with it until you left or did it get so bad that you couldn't face going.*
>
> *S: I must admit one teacher said about an incident where a black friend and myself nearly got locked in the library at the end of the day by accident, he said, "You black people should be locked up"... There were quite a few witnesses to that and the teachers refused to unlock the library door. We ended up going to the Headmaster who told us not to be silly. They didn't believe us. We had to run over to get this boy's dad who broke the library door to get him out and the police got involved. His dad proceeded with a complaint. Only because of this did the teacher get punished. I felt that was the last straw...*
>
> *Mo: I was not aware of this until 6 months before they left. I came home and found her here.*
>
> *I: You didn't go to the last year in school?*
>
> *S: No. I had abuse from one girl throughout my whole time at that school until it got to one particular time when she said 'your mum is nothing but a white whore'. I turned around and pulled her hair out and I was the one who got into trouble.*

Among the children listed in Table 13.1 six reported similar problems at school. If anything, the children in this group were slightly more likely than children in the sample as a whole to report incidents of race-related teasing or name calling. The numbers were very low, but at the least we can conclude that these children from mixed heritage backgrounds experienced racist reactions as much as other minority ethnic children.

Implications for schools

What are the implications of all this for teachers in mainly white schools? In many respects what children with a mixed heritage background need of their teachers is similar to the requirements of all minority ethnic pupils. For example, they need a school where the adults are watchful for any signs of racism and take firm action whenever they appear. Additionally, however, they need an exceptional sensitivity to issues relating to the development of a sense of their own identity. The point that some parents wanted to make about this can best be illustrated by quoting an extract from an interview that focuses on a classic index of the effectiveness of multiethnic education - how do black children perceive themselves when they draw their own picture?

The stepmother of one child, who herself had a mixed heritage, Black Caribbean/White British background, described an episode in Year 3 at school when the children were all drawing to illustrate her view that teachers must be sensitive to a child's mixed ethnic heritage:

> *Once at school someone drawed him white. Has he told you about that? They was doing - you draw me and I'll draw you. And K said, "I'll draw you white cos you're white." And, well, this little boy drawed K pink, and the teacher said that K drawed himself pink. And I said, "K wouldn't draw himself pink. K knows the colour of his skin." So I asked K: "I don't mind if you draw white cos Mama's white, isn't she? ["Mama" was the stepmother's mother.] I don't mind if you want to be white." He said "No, Mum, I drawed myself black like you, cos we're black aren't we, we're brown. I made him draw me brown." Then one of the teachers said, "K said he wished he was white." ...that is not right, because he plays with a few black people. He knows what colour he is... But he never did anything like that in the Infants. But there was Indians there. There wasn't many black kids there either. But maybe he did say it, maybe he did take it out, being the only black person and wanted to compete like the rest of them. Because the teacher said when she let people draw colours, there's a pink there. So K's obviously going to draw himself pink, if there's not a brown. He's not going to jump up, "I want brown cos I'm brown. He's probably feeling a bit silly cos he's the only brown child in his class. But she should have put a brown there for K. She shouldn't have gave him pink. Another time the teacher put down pink, and K started to draw himself with pink, and she says: "Oh sorry, K, let's give you a brown." And K said: "Oh, thanks." But they shouldn't do that. If there's a black child in your class, you should put down a brown paint for that black child. Isn't that right, am I lying?*

Later in the interview the researcher returned to the topic:

> *I: Then you were talking about this insensitive incident with the drawing? Have you had other incidents like that?*
>
> *Mo: No, but I wasn't happy about it. When you make kids draw theirselves, you put the right colours down for them to draw theirselves. I mean my little boy that's two, he draws himself flipping purple. But he don't know no different, but he [i.e. K] knows he's black. But [his little brother] don't know he's black. He can be green, I'm not bothered. I tell my kids they're black and they're white, I'm black and I'm white, you're both colours... you're special. I tell my kids, "You're not just black and you're not just white, you're extra special. You've got black Grandma and white Grandma. Not many kids have got that." They should feel special, and K does.*
>
> *I: You feel he does?*

Mo: Yeah, I don't think he feels he wants to be white, and I don't think he feels horrible about being black. I don't feel that he does. Mind you, he might, but not that I know about.

At various points in this report we have noted a tendency for teachers in mainly white schools to play down and even ignore ethnic and cultural differences among their pupils. This tendency appears to be particularly strong in the case of children from mixed heritage backgrounds. Thus the form tutor for one of the pupils whose parents' views on a balanced approach were quoted above expressed surprise that he was selected for this project:

T: ...I never really, I never really thought of either of them as belonging to an ethnic minority to be quite honest with you. I'm still slightly puzzled as to why you chose them. Perhaps you know something more than I do, um, why did you choose them? That was one of the questions I (specifically) wanted to ask.

I: Because they are, they are part of a minority group, they're dual heritage.

Far from wanting to downplay their children's minority ethnicity, several of our parents with mixed heritage children would have been pleased to contribute to the multicultural curriculum of the school. They felt that this would both help their child feel more comfortable there and foster a greater awareness of diversity among white pupils. But most teachers of the children in this subsample perceived adaptation to the local community as a priority for the children. Thus, for example, the class teacher of one child when asked whether he was suppressing his sense of ethnic identity, replied:

I don't know if he has much of a sense of his own ethnic identity. You know, can he suppress something that [he isn't aware of]? With all the other children on the estate down there. You know, that's his life. He doesn't know any different.

This teacher was in her fourth year of teaching and had not encountered any minority ethnic pupils except for this boy (who had a White British mother and a Black Caribbean father who no longer lived with them). She later said of the school:

Probably because we don't have much experience of working with ethnic minority children...but then do you need experience? I would say you wouldn't. I just treat them all the same.

Our interviews with his mother and with other teachers made it clear that his older brother had encountered serious problems with racism at school. Their mother tried to give the flavour of his less extreme experiences at school and made clear that they are unavoidable:

...I think people...it's an automatic reaction rather than a...I don't know really. There is a reaction...a slight reaction. Especially, (if) people see me first and then the children [she is white]. It's still...and I sometimes think I can see...this is a general thing. Not necessarily the school, you know...um, I can see a slight hesitation for want of a better word. You see, I've been on the other side of the coin because when I was in Jamaica (where she lived with her ex-husband near his family) it happened a lot to me. You know, people didn't expect a white woman to be in the position that I was in. You know, so I was getting it from the other side.

A learning support teacher gave a different reason for de-emphasising an awareness of one child's ethnic status:

> *I don't really think of him as being from an ethnic minority. But perhaps, um, you know, so I've got this, you know. I've never really thought about his being from an ethnic minority. But perhaps that is what the government is saying that... we should be more aware... We don't see it that way. Because he's special needs, I think I approach Aaron as a child that, um, I've not thought about whether his colour... causes him any real problems, because I think he's got other learning difficulties which I am employed to work on. He's got his Statement of his objectives and his targets, and we work on those. And, um, I haven't really thought about it. (Laughs)*

The teachers of three other mixed heritage pupils also said that they had not regarded ethnic or cultural background as an issue in their work with the child or were not clear what the background was. When another child's teacher (who did have details of the child's background) was asked what kind of guidance she thought would be helpful in a school like hers for pupils from ethnic minorities, she replied:

> *Probably something along the lines of how much to make of them being different and how much to make of them being the same as everyone else. I don't always think that you draw attention to difference. You should try and get across that we're all the same, black, white, etc, we're all the same.*

The class teacher of a Year 6 boy had worked in a multiethnic school as a newly qualified teacher before coming to the mainly white primary school where we met her. She thought that this had had a considerable influence on her attitude:

> *T: I was a newly qualified teacher when I went into the other school. The main thing I noticed was the amount of different cultural backgrounds, European backgrounds as well as Asian and African. It was quite a surprise for me because things that I took for granted, such as backgrounds that children had, wasn't actually the case. I had one child that came over from Jamaica when he was 7 or 8 years old. He didn't know any of the fairy tales that we assume that children know because that wasn't his upbringing. It's the little things like that that make you think. Here, the majority of children are from the same kind of background, so those sorts of things are not so noticeable.*
>
> *I: Would you say it's taken for granted in this school all children should know the fairy tales, the stories and the nursery rhymes?*
>
> *T: I can't speak for other teachers, I was made aware of it having taught in a different school, so I don't tend to do that. It's not just children from ethnic minorities that don't know the fairy tales there's a lot of children coming up now that have had less of that sort of upbringing; with their parents not being at home etc. The reason I don't take it for granted is that I was aware of it before. It's very easy to take it for granted especially if that was your upbringing... I think you have to be careful relying on the cultural things that we take for granted. Telling them stories from different backgrounds, where all the children may not be familiar with that story, so that you are bringing in other influences for them. Using a mixture of resources that are from different types of family and cultural backgrounds. If you are using a mix all the time then I don't think that people are going to feel left out because their family or cultural background isn't being included in that school. The way that you portray things in the classroom is important too; making it clear that there isn't just one background.*

The point made in her last sentence was one that many of the children and parents in this group would have affirmed. When working with children from a mixed heritage family, however, teachers face additional challenges. Firstly, their background is unusually complex, and, secondly, parents vary in their view of what an appropriate balance would be between paying attention to what they share with the white majority in the school and to the ethnic and cultural inheritance that distinguishes them from others. There is, in addition, a third challenge: the children themselves may change their ethnic preferences over time, exploring different aspects of their potential identity at different stages of development. One of the parents, who herself had a mixed heritage background, told us:

> *I wanted to be white when I was younger. It might just be a black thing. I can remember wanting to be white like my mum. I didn't want to be black when I was in school. It might just be kids that age.*

By "kids that age" she seemed to refer to change during childhood. There would be an almost inevitable changing of preference as children negotiate in their own living space and find the identity that they want or that is most tolerable in a society which is openly racist or at least tries to close its eyes to race and ethnicity.

13.3 Overview of the findings

1. Mixed heritage children form a significant group among the minority ethnic population of mainly white schools. They comprised a quarter of our sample in the case study schools. The official statistics had not prepared us for that when we started the study. This chapter must, therefore, be read with some caution. Further research is needed with a wider age-span to investigate some of the issues outlined below.

2. Most of the children from mixed heritage backgrounds spoke English at home, and this may be seen as an advantage for their adaptation to life in a mainly white school. However, like some children both of whose parents were from one minority ethnic group, there were mixed heritage pupils who would have appreciated support from school in learning or maintaining the language of their minority ethnic parent, for example by provision of lunchtime clubs.

3. There were many other issues raised by our informants in connection with the performance and social adjustment of this group that were similar to those raised when discussing children both of whose parents shared the same ethnic background. For example, they suffered racist teasing and name calling at school as frequently.

4. A distinctive aspect of the experience of children from mixed heritage backgrounds was their identity development. For the children themselves and their parents this was fraught with tensions and sources of confusion which appeared only rarely to be tackled in a considered way that left the children with a comfortable sense of who they were. Further research is needed over the impact of different strategies of identity construction over time. For instance, it is important to know if some issues are dormant at early ages, but will emerge at later stages of adolescent development.

5. As we have noted in previous chapters, teachers often told us that they play down ethnic differences as their preferred approach to pupils in this group. That also applies to children from a mixed heritage background. Issues around the identity development of children who have a mixed heritage were experienced intensively by their parents and by the children themselves. Some of the parents would have been happy to contribute more to develop an awareness of a range of cultures at school. However, our interview records indicated that few of the teachers appreciated either the families' confusions or the readiness of some parents to help to foster both the minority identity of their own child and the understanding and celebration of diversity by white members of the school. Future work on mixed heritage children in mainly white schools should be designed to develop a fuller understanding of how teachers can support children in this position to construct inclusive multiple identities instead of forcing them to fit in to an ultimately inappropriate White British norm.

Chapter 14 Concluding thoughts

As a research team we have learned a great deal from this project. Each of us was led to reflect back on our own experiences of being different and an outsider in groups of which we were part during childhood and later. We were often impressed and moved by the strength and courage that the children and parents brought to the challenges they faced. There were a very few white informants who left us feeling uneasy because they assumed that we would empathise with the difficulties that might be experienced in working with minority ethnic children. We were aware of the overwhelming pressures on the schools and knew that the area of concern that we were inviting them to explore formed a small part of the challenges they faced. Yet precisely because the implications of having a small proportion of minority ethnic pupils in a school can so easily be overlooked, it is necessary that it is given higher priority in the guidance that underpins teachers' thinking and planning.

We invited a subsample of our most important informants, the children, to contribute their final thoughts to the discussion. A second interview was conducted with pupils in two of the secondary schools and three of the primary schools. The follow-up meetings took place around the time of the General Election campaign during which there was a good deal of media coverage of an incident when a woman gave Tony Blair an eloquent account of how the Health Service had let down her family. The interview ended with this question:

> *If you met the Prime Minister in the street and you could tell him one thing he could do to make schools better, what would you tell him?*

One child had no suggestions, saying: "*I like this school how it is at the moment.*" Some of the children made suggestions that did not relate to the specific theme of this research but probably reflected concerns that are felt generally among school pupils - better teachers and equipment, better discipline, stronger measures to reduce bullying, shorter literacy sessions and improved school buildings. For one Year 4 girl that would include a water fountain - not, she said, because it is Indian but because she likes water fountains.

Also, regarding resources for pupils other than members of minority ethnic groups, it is worth recording in full the contribution from a Year 8 boy who attended a school with integrated provision for children with hearing impairment. He thought that other schools should be properly equipped to support them as his school was.

> "*I think mainly about deaf people, about helping people, in school, deaf people, a classroom for deaf people, ...this special thing they can switch on and they can hear what you're saying, and people that are stuck and can't say words and have to go to learning support, learn more. More buildings and pay for ... like new books and new clothes, Especially for these people who maybe can't talk very easily and so on... Some people in different schools, like in L, they don't have hearing aids, they just try and (he knocks on the table) like that. And one day (when) I went to L, I saw this deaf person and they said it's because she's a deaf person and she couldn't hear, she couldn't hear, and she was typing in a sentence and she couldn't hear, and if she had a hearing aid she'd probably practice ... And like disabled people, yes, they should help them and brain damage, they should get more teachers to help them, and if they really do need help they should get substitute teachers for all the people and the normal teachers teach me, that's what I think.*"

Some of the replies indicated that the children were reflecting on the issues that had come up during their meetings with us and wanted to improve things particularly in relation to minority ethnic pupils in mainly white schools. We think their words will form a suitable postscript encompassing the key messages of this research:

- A Year 3 girl wanted to learn her family language at school. *"Not like French, just know how to speak it because I never really learnt how to speak (it) and I would want to... they could arrange an extra class for people, like French club. They could have clubs for people who want to learn their own language."* Then she could understand her grandparents when they speak it quickly. Her father cannot speak it and so has not taught her.

- A bright Year 5 boy from a Chinese background, who was also concerned about language, gave a concise answer that seems to reflect a widely shared impatience with British monolingual habits in a rapidly changing world: *"Make all the English speak Chinese."*

- A compliant Year 7 girl confided that a child who had recently arrived in her school from her own country of origin was not getting enough help. She felt that she herself was being expected to support the new pupil to the detriment of her own work. There should be more teachers to help someone in that position.

- A Year 8 girl thought that *"to make schools better, they should... get more people from like different backgrounds in the school because it's sometimes, it's a bit hard to like to connect to people if you're not really from the same background and you don't understand somebody. Well, you do understand but you don't really find it appropriate or you don't think it's right. So it's easier to get on with someone from the same background, who understands, what you, when you ... Cos sometimes, you know, you get, you do make friends, but sometimes they don't, they don't really click with, as much you would with someone from your own ethnic background because they don't really understand the things you do."*

- A Year 5 boy wanted the Prime Minister to *"tell the English not to pick on other people from different backgrounds. Make friends with them. If you fall out with them, don't tease them because of their religion. Just be their friends."*

- A Year 4 girl thought school would be a better place for Indian girls if teachers found out more about you when you first start. *"...they should ask me some questions, like a bit about me... so then they would know what I like and what I do... They should, like, ask a few questions before. Like, what kinds of food do you like? And - is it hard for you?"*

Thus the children's suggestions focused on school social life, teachers' preparedness, racist bullying and language issues. These issues include some of the key messages from the project. We have concluded that at present mainly white schools do not adequately prepare their pupils for adult life in a society that is culturally and ethnically diverse. That is unlikely to change unless greater priority is given to that goal in national education policies and curriculum development, as in the new programmes of study in Citizenship in the National Curriculum (DfEE/QCA, 1999). In working towards this end it is important that diversity within the minority ethnic population is respected. "One size fits

all" solutions would create additional problems for the minority ethnic pupils and parents who participated in this study. In the current situation many children "play white" and many teachers minimise the significance and the value of cultural and ethnic diversity. Moving forward from that situation will require that teachers in mainly white schools are supported towards a fuller understanding of the range of backgrounds and perspectives that are represented in the more and more dispersed minority ethnic population of England in the 21st century.

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